

Empowering and encouraging leaders
to do church ministry effectively!

Family Ministries

Church Ministry Manuals



Dr. Byan Cutshall

CHURCHTRAINER
SERIES

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*And whatever you do, do it heartily,
as to the Lord and not to men,
knowing that from the Lord you will
receive the reward of the inheritance;
for you serve the Lord Christ.
(Colossians 3:23, 24)*

chapter one:

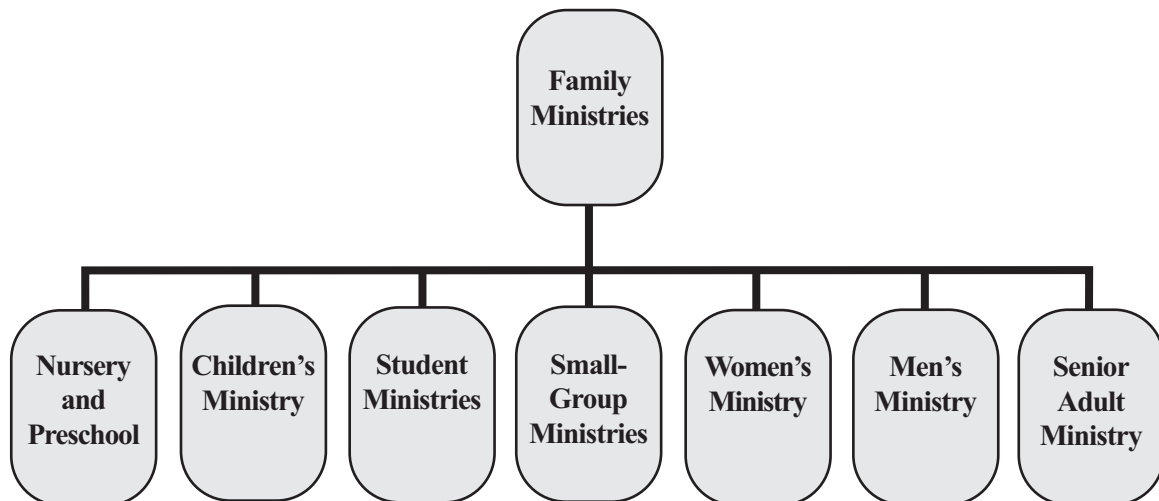
FAMILY MATTERS

It all begins with the family. The first institution God made was the family. Family ministry is the center of all activity—the core foundation to building a strong and vital nation:

- Strong families build strong churches.
- Strong churches build strong communities.
- Strong communities build strong cities.
- Strong cities build strong nations.

The crime epidemic of our country can be traced back to the breakdown of the family unit. The social crisis of our country can be traced back to the breakdown of the family unit. Without a strong emphasis and ministry to the family, the church will be unstable. Besides worship and the Word of God, nothing is more important to the vitalization of a church than to build a strong, healthy environment where families can thrive.

Family ministry consists of a graded program for life, from birth through the senior years of a person's life. The ministries must span the generations. A church with a missing generation is one generation away from nonexistence. Every generation needs to know how to build a strong family and have a lasting marriage. We must blend the generations and allow each age group to get a healthy view of the generation before and after. The only illustration that is complete is one that shows couples at every phase of life. That is why in a healthy church, you see every generation present and involved.



PASTOR JOE WRIGHT'S PRAYER IN THE KANSAS SENATE

When Pastor Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate, everyone was expecting the usual generalities, but this is what they heard:

Heavenly Father, we come before You today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good," but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it politics. We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Amen!

The response was immediate. A number of legislators walked out in protest during the prayer. In six weeks, Central Christian Church, where Reverend Wright is pastor, logged more than 5,000 phone calls with less than 1 percent of those calls responding negatively. The church has received international requests for copies of the prayer from as far away as India, Africa and Korea. Commentator Paul Harvey aired the prayer on his radio program, *The Rest of the Story*. America is crying out for values again. The only way the value and ethic system of our world will ever be turned around is for the church to offer a solution to the moral crisis. This begins with family ministries.

FAMILY MINISTRY IDEAS

CLASSES ON MARRIAGE

There are many great books, video series and manuals for teaching a class on marriage. This can be offered during the regular class time or as an extracurricular class. Nevertheless, with divorce rates rising astronomically, it should not be ignored.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

Many churches consider a talk with the pastor equivalent to premarital counseling. Unfortunately, it doesn't produce the same results. In addition to this *Family Ministries Manual* in the *Total Church Training System*, there is a *Premarital Counseling Manual* available. It is one of the few books of its kind.

In it, you will find a comprehensive compatibility test and other tools for evaluating the couple's strengths and weaknesses. Many churches require couples to attend classes in order to marry. This is a great idea! Most classes cover the basics and then, based on the Compatibility Test scores, you can determine if additional counseling is needed.

DATE NIGHTS

In a society where *busyness* has become a social disease, it is more important than ever to provide service ministries to aid the family. Dating is just as important in a marriage as it was before the marriage. Couples who no longer date fall into stagnant routines where marriage becomes a lifestyle of problem-solving, duties, responsibilities and disappointments. Couples need to dream about their futures, play together, laugh together, and do spontaneous things that make them feel young and adventurous. Date nights are the best way to accomplish this.

Many times, child care and finances prohibit couples from dating. One of the ways the church can help is by offering a list of qualified babysitters. They can also provide child care at the church as a ministry or for a small fee. If a "Parents' Night Out" is advertised in advance, many couples will stop in the middle of their chaotic routine and plan a date.

DAY CARE AND SUMMER DAY CAMPS

Churches that provide a day care program not only offer a great service to their community, but to their families as well. Day care is financially beneficial for a church, but is even more valuable to a family. Leaving their child with a stranger is one of the hardest things parents will ever do. A day care they can trust is a treasure.

Churches need to view day care as more than a business. It is a ministry, and as a ministry, scholarships should be available to families that need the service but can't afford it. There is no need for the day care to take a financial hit. There are many ways to create a scholarship fund, such as endowment funds, investments, fund-raising banquets or golf tournaments.

Summer Day Camp is also a great way to minister to a family. Families with two working parents are often faced with a dilemma when the children are out of school for the summer. Many times, the children are forced to stay with people who know nothing about how a child should enjoy the few summer breaks they will get in their lifetime. The Summer Day Camp is a daily program that provides nutritious meals, field trips, movie times and a chance to be with friends. Not only is this a great business for the church, it is also a tremendous community outreach and family ministry.

FAMILY RETREATS

Retreats are great fun and can come in all shapes and sizes. Retreats can be offered for couples, children, teens, families, seniors, singles and just about any family-type group. At this weekend getaway, individuals are able to break away from the routine and enjoy a few days of relaxation and friendship. Memories are made that will last a lifetime.

Retreat settings can range from a camp-out to a hotel and shopping spree. There are many creative ways to provide this much-needed getaway. Retreats can have spiritual overtones, but they should never be filled with classes and a heavy schedule. Families need time to play. They need a chance to interact with each other and their friends. The weekend should be full of fun moments created to spiritually connect with God and each other.

SINGLES MINISTRY

One of the largest segments of our society is the single group. Singles cannot be easily defined because they are broken down into so many categories. There are young singles, never-married singles, single-again singles, single parents, senior singles, and so on. The key to this ministry is finding a group that is alike and forming a small-group ministry with them. As numerous small groups are formed, they can occasionally come together as a larger group for activities.

Churches that start generic singles ministries and try to put everyone in the same group usually do not succeed. This is really an adult ministry to an indigenous group. *Single* is not a label or definition of a person. It is only a description of one small part of their life.

Singles are one of the largest untapped resources in the church. One of the best things to do for singles is educate people about such things as living single in a church family environment, or what it means to be a single parent and the unique challenges single parents face. Churches need to see singles as a group to do ministry through, not just ministry to.

BLESSINGS AT BIRTH ENCOURAGERS (BABE)

This is a ministry celebration to couples or single mothers who have just had a baby. The BABE team delivers

a basket filled with diapers and other items needed for a newborn. In addition, they organize a group of volunteers to provide food for the family for the first week or two after the mother comes home from the hospital. This can be a great comfort to a family who is feeding a child and adjusting to the baby's sleeping patterns. Some groups also put a stork-shaped sign in the yard announcing the birth of the baby.

FINANCIAL TRAINING CLASSES

Financial training is of critical importance in our world. Families can easily find themselves strapped by debt in only a couple of years. In many cases, the credit-card trap consumes their income in only a few months. Classes on family budgets, investments, and how to create additional income can change their quality of life forever. Groups like Crown Financial and Financial Peace University have courses that can be taught easily.

Some entrepreneur groups also have the insight to bring in retired businesspeople who are more than willing to share the stories of their success. Many of them are thrilled to get the call to come and speak to the class. There are countless creative ways to educate people on this subject.

FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE

If a church uses the word *family* in its name, mission statement or motto, it is imperative that they consider developing a graded program that takes a person from the cradle to the grave.

Even if a church is small and can't afford a full-time staff, a pastor of family ministries can be hired who will oversee volunteer teams to make sure these ministries are healthy and vital. This pastor should hold two meetings a month: one with the leaders of the groups and one with the teams.

Much of this ministry's purpose is to provide ministry/teaching settings, along with social activities for each age group.

In a larger church, there may be other full-time or part-time staff persons who oversee this ministry. In the larger church, a weekly staff meeting is necessary for the leaders and a monthly staff meeting for the broader ministry teams.

As you go through this *Family Ministries Manual*, you will learn how to organize and operate each of these family ministries. A PowerPoint is available for each chapter and can be obtained separately by contacting us at the following: 314-729-0704 (ext. 35) or info@churchtrainer.com.

WHAT IS THE NURSERY AND PRESCHOOL MINISTRY (N&PS)?

The nursery and preschool years are the foundation for lifelong Christian values. Children learn 80 percent of their total value system by age 5. For this reason, N&PS should never be considered babysitting. While child care is one of the primary reasons for its existence, the N&PS ministry to children extends much further than child care; it is a ministry that will help shape the future of the church and community. It is imperative for the church to invest time, money and energy in this department because parents and grandparents deem it one of the most important deciding factors when considering a new church. The quality of the N&PS program can either attract or repel people from your church.

ESSENTIAL BASICS

The N&PS area should always be clean, appropriately decorated and staffed with pleasant caretakers. If possible, workers should have matching smocks or uniforms. The department ought to look as professional as possible. Rooms should . . .

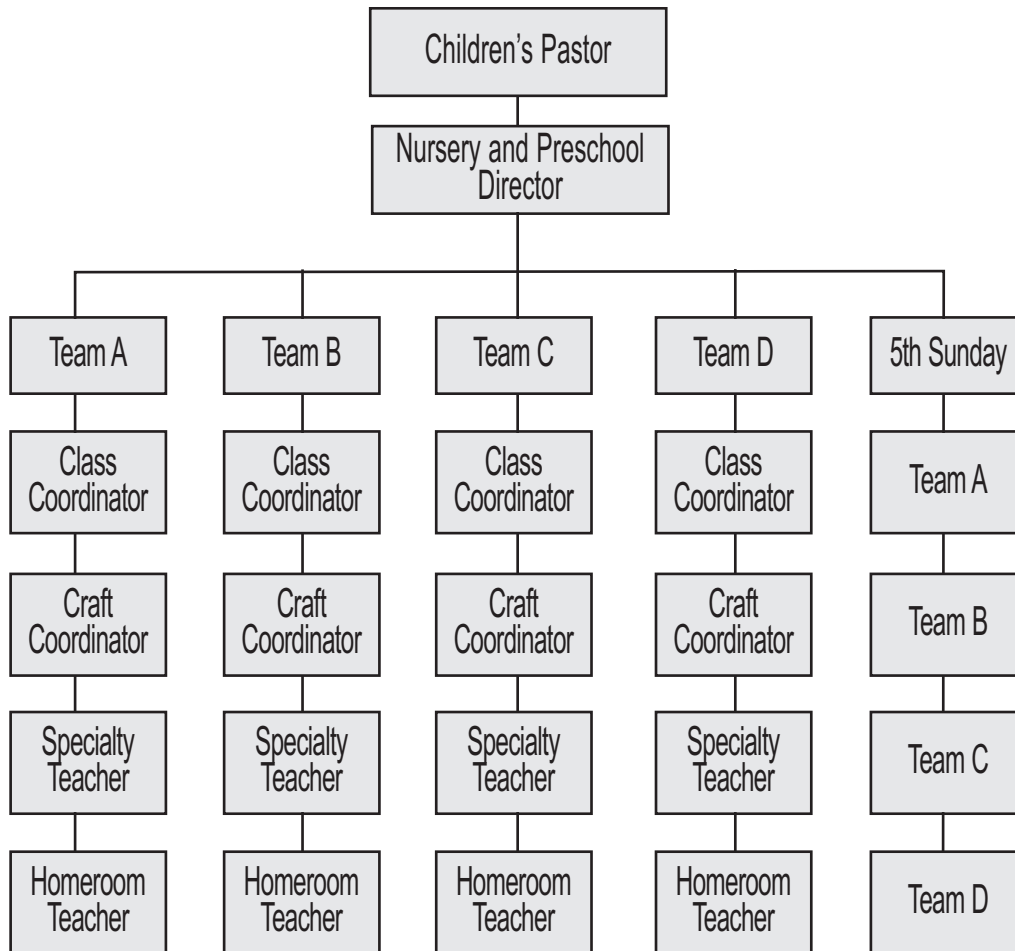
- Be well-lit and painted in bright colors that stimulate learning.
- Be stocked with toys, learning tools and supplies.
- Have organized bins for diaper-bag storage, instead of setting them on the floor.

Each week, there should be smiling faces at a designated place to greet the parents and children for check-in. When families walk into the room, they should hear music playing and see a well-organized environment that makes them and their child feel safe. A caring, mature staff, with a few teen helpers, will help to accomplish this. First-time visiting parents should receive a packet of information explaining the policies and procedures of the N&PS Department. They should be well-informed of the notification system that is used, in case their child needs them during the service. These procedures will cause a new family to feel safe as they leave their precious treasure in the hands of strangers.

HOW IS A NURSERY AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAM ORGANIZED?

THE ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

The N&PS is structured on a team concept. Each team serves one Sunday per month. There are four different teams for the department, and each team rotates on a schedule for the months that have a fifth Sunday. The leader of the team is called the class coordinator. Other members of the team include the craft coordinator, the teacher and the homeroom teacher.



HOW IT WORKS

The class coordinator ensures that every member of the team is in place each Sunday before the children arrive. The craft coordinator sets up the crafts in the craft rooms ahead of time and then attends church. Each classroom has one teacher ready to receive students. The homeroom teacher travels with the children to each station.

The children arrive first to their homeroom. They are greeted by the homeroom teacher and the teacher who serves at that station. In homeroom, attendance is taken and the offering is received. Children spend the next 15 minutes at that first station. Five minutes are given to change stations. Every 15 minutes thereafter, the homeroom teachers and their students proceed to a new station. The following is a suggested schedule:

CLASS SCHEDULE

TIME	CRAFT ROOM	VIDEO ROOM	SNACK ROOM	LESSON ROOM	PLAY ROOM	MUSIC ROOM
10:40-10:55	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds		
11:00-11:15		2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds	
11:20-11:35			2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds
11:40-11:55	5-year-olds			2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds
12:00-12:15	4-year-olds	5-year-olds			2-year-olds	3-year-olds
12:20-12:35	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds			2-year-olds
12:40-?	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds		

THE CLASS ROTATION SYSTEM

When the number of staff, personnel and classrooms allow, the class rotation system seems to work best. The students rotate classrooms every 20 minutes to begin a new segment of the learning experience. The classrooms are called *stations*. Each station is set up to provide a new experience for the students. In one station, they will learn music. In the next station, they will do a craft. In the next station, they will have refreshments. In another station, they will have a story lesson. A church can create as many or as few stations as needed to fill the time slot for nursery duty.

Strong points of the rotation system are as follows:

- Children do not get restless or bored as easily.
- Children get introduced to a system they will use in most of their years of education.
- Teachers prepare a 20-minute lesson they will present to each group level.
- Substitution for an absent teacher is much easier when only 20 minutes of material is needed.

THE VALUE OF A GRADE OR AGE-APPROPRIATE PROGRAM

It is important that each age group or grade receives a presentation of the gospel in a way that is age-appropriate. The graded system allows children to learn on a level geared to their age development and level of understanding. Even smaller churches should seek to divide into age groups when possible to ensure that every child is developing properly in Christian values.

The following graded program is suggested:

Nursery: 6 weeks to 12 months—Children at this level are still learning how to walk and communicate. It takes a group of special people who understand the developmental process of a baby to handle the needs of this fun, cute—yet needy—group. The teacher must understand that all lessons need to be filled with visual, physical and auditory aids. At this age level, children learn best from what they see, touch and hear.

Nursery: 12 months to 24 months—Once a child reaches 12 months, communication skills are better developed and they sing and participate in group learning exercises. At this level, children primarily use their bodies to explore the world around them. We suggest at this stage that the value of the Bible is emphasized. This can be done with a simple song like “I Love to Pat the Bible” or “The B-I-B-L-E.”

It is good to pass a Bible around to the children as they sing these songs. It instills a value in them that the Word of God is precious and should be treasured. Visual aids are also used to demonstrate that *Jesus* and *love* are synonymous. Children can learn to “rock the baby Jesus” as they sing a song about Him which will help them to identify with Him at an early age.

The most important values to be conveyed in the Nursery Department are those of Jesus, the Bible, love and friendship. While there are many other values addressed, these are the primary ones to be reiterated on a weekly basis. The room should have pictures of Jesus, a Bible and happy children.

Toddlers/Preschool: 2- and 3-year-olds—Children at this level enjoy the physical activity that comes with their new mobility skills. They develop better motor skills and can manipulate objects with their hands. They begin to see themselves as a part of the broader community and start to form opinions about certain individuals who make them feel safe and others who annoy them.

At this age, children need lessons that involve them physically. Lessons should be filled with two or three visual aids. Young toddlers are also ready to learn short Bible verses, do simple crafts and memorize songs. Action

sing-a-long songs are a favorite. At this age, they enjoy dressing up and wearing costumes or conversing with a puppet. They also enjoy cartoon videos, such as *VeggieTales*[®].

Toddlers/Preschool: 4- and 5-year-olds—When children graduate into the preschool class, they are ready to interact with the world around them. They follow rules and realize that the rules make them feel safe. They have started to experience peer expectation and learn the art of conflict resolution for the first time. They have discovered logic and curiously want to know how everything works.

Their Bible lessons should be enhanced with several visual aids. They enjoy toy musical instruments and can be quite good at keeping a steady rhythm. They like to play as they sing and they especially love to sing songs that have lots of motions. They need a reward system to enforce their good behavior since at this stage, behavior is more about choice than instinct. They are able to learn Bible verses and even repeat stories very well. The teacher of this group needs to leave a lot of time for questions because this curious crowd is hungry for knowledge.

THE N&PS STAFF

THE CHILDREN'S PASTOR

In most medium-to-large churches, the children's pastor is the general supervisor over the entire children's program. Usually, when a church is in the position to hire a full-time N&PS director, the N&PS director no longer reports to the children's pastor. In smaller churches that do not have paid staff, the two roles are usually separate as well. Though the children's pastor primarily runs a program for grades 1-6, he or she still oversees the N&PS Department by working closely with the N&PS director. It is especially important that this team coordinates events, so as to not overlap, since many families have children in both areas.

THE N&PS DIRECTOR

The N&PS director is responsible to oversee the entire operation of the program for children ages 6 weeks through kindergarten. Some churches have a newborn nursery as well, but many choose not to because of the specialized care required for handling newborns.

Here is a brief summary of the job description for the N&PS director:

- Recruit, train and encourage the registration receptionist(s).
- Recruit, train and encourage the class coordinators.
- Recruit, train and encourage the craft coordinators.
- Recruit, train and encourage teachers.
- Recruit, train and encourage workers.
- Oversee the schedule for volunteers.
- Establish a system of communication for all staff and workers.
- Create a monthly newsletter for parents.
- Oversee and monitor the inventory of supplies.
- Oversee the N&PS budget.

- Create all policies and procedures to allow the N&PS department to function effectively.
- Follow up on all first-time visitors and guests in the department.
- Create an annual calendar of events for the department to be issued at the beginning of each year.
- Coordinate the lesson plans for each week.

NURSERY TEACHER AND WORKERS

There is one teacher who serves each week in the Nursery Department. There may be several rooms, but the lesson plan at this age is repetitious and brief. It usually consists of a couple of action songs where children become familiar with the concepts of Jesus, the Bible and friends. In addition to the teacher, there is one worker for every four babies. The time in the nursery is spent holding the children, attending to their needs, feeding them a bottle when necessary, changing diapers and singing to them.

CLASS COORDINATORS FOR THE N&PS

The class coordinators are leaders in the N&PS Department who oversee the group of volunteer staff assigned to the area. Each class coordinator works with the director to staff the assigned area with qualified and well-trained individuals who will carry out preassigned tasks. The class coordinators should observe and implement the mission and vision of the church as well as monitor the weekly lessons, crafts, music, and so forth.

CRAFT COORDINATOR FOR THE PRESCHOOL

The craft coordinator organizes the crafts for a particular group in the N&PS. This individual plans and prepares the crafts each week and has them set up prior to each teacher's arrival.

THE PRESCHOOL TEACHER

The preschool teacher is in charge of a particular classroom and function. On a rotating schedule, children start with the homeroom teacher who then moves with them to each class. In each classroom, there is a different teacher in charge of one segment of the lesson plan. It may be the music teacher, craft teacher or lesson teacher. The homeroom teacher brings the children into the classroom, and that teacher presents their 20-minute lesson plan for that day.

The rotating system is the best way to keep teachers from experiencing burnout. In churches that do not use the rotating system, there tends to be a huge turnover because teachers have to plan for one to one-and-a-half hours, and they stay with the same group the entire time.

The director is responsible for getting the curriculum to the teachers at least two weeks prior to their scheduled class. Each teacher should be well-versed in the lesson and have visual aids prepared to reinforce the lesson. The visual aids are the teacher's responsibility.

The following is a brief job description for the teachers:

- Be at church one-half hour before scheduled service.
- Prepare the room to receive children 15 minutes prior to class.
- Be posted at the classroom door to receive children and check them out at the end of service.
- Call children by name to help them feel welcome.

- Help to calm children who may be upset at leaving their parents.
- Keep the class orderly.
- Never leave the room during class unless absolutely necessary.
- Hand out crafts, coloring pages, newsletter, and any other papers.
- Communicate all necessary information to the parents or class coordinator.
- Return all supplies back to the appropriate container or cabinet.
- Report anticipated absences to the class coordinator and the director, and identify the proposed teacher substitute.
- Call the class coordinator with any questions or new ideas about the class.
- Attend worship services at least twice a month.

HOMEROOM TEACHER FOR PRESCHOOL

Some churches pay their N&PS staff. This handbook is not intended to address the issue of paid staff, but rather to assist in better organizing and training volunteer staff. Volunteers are scheduled with each teacher to assist as needed. This may include material distribution or helping a child with a specific task.

The following is a brief job description for the homeroom teacher:

- Receive the children into the classroom each week by greeting them at the door.
- Be available at least 15 minutes prior to class to help receive the children.
- Be friendly and alert at all times.
- Assist the teacher in caring for the children and carrying out the designated lesson plan.
- Assist in taking children to the restroom or changing diapers if needed.
- Assist in keeping children calm and content at all times.
- Assist parents in feeling good about leaving their children in the N&PS program.
- Wear the designated uniform that identifies a trained worker in the program.

REGISTRATION ATTENDANT

The registration attendant attends the desk where parents or guardians sign in their children. The attendant is a crucial part of the program and must be a responsible individual who is both cordial and professional. An outgoing person with a friendly personality is ideal for this job. In order to properly prepare, the attendant needs to arrive at the desk at least 30 minutes prior to receiving the children. He or she is the family's first impression of the N&PS Department and should be well-dressed, organized, attentive and friendly to help make the parents feel comfortable.

Here are a few of the duties and responsibilities of the registration attendant:

- Set up the registration desk with sign-in sheets, registration boxes, and any other necessary items before registration begins.
- Greet and register all children. Call the children by name, if possible.
- Give instructions to the visitors and anyone else who may need assistance.

- Make sure first-time visitors complete the registration card that provides vital information about the family and child. Visitors should also receive a N&PS informational brochure at the time of registration. The family is then directed to the classroom or drop-off station.
- Nursery-age babies and parents are assigned an ID number used to contact the parent if their assistance is needed. Most churches electronically post the number on a board or screen to alert the parent. Other churches have a pager system. The parent is issued a pager that vibrates and/or lights up, similar to the kind used at a restaurant for table notification.
- Parents must also sign out to receive their child. No child will be signed out unless the person has the security card with that child's name and security number on it.
- The attendant should stay at the registration station during the entire operating hours of the N&PS. They are the first line of security for the department.

STUDENT-TEACHER RATIO

One of the most decisive areas of interest for a parent and worker is the student-teacher ratio. Each church needs to determine how many workers are needed for the number of students registered. The following student-teacher ratio guideline works well in setting up the N&PS ministry:

Infants 4 to 1 (four infants per teacher)

Toddlers 8 to 1 (eight toddlers per teacher)

Preschool 10 to 1 (10 preschool students per teacher)

ORGANIZING THE TEAM

THE N&PS LEADERSHIP MEETING

There should be a separate meeting for leaders and workers. The leadership meeting should address issues pertaining to groups. The workers meeting will deal with issues pertaining to housekeeping and procedures. If there is a joint meeting, workers may try to solve leadership issues, and the meetings may become long and nonproductive.

WEEKLY LEADERSHIP MEETING

This meeting is a time for N&PS leadership to plan, set and evaluate goals. Since the meeting occurs weekly, it can be brief and to the point. This is also a great time for problem-solving, writing policy and training. Before the meeting ends, the director should pray over the leaders and their families.

MONTHLY STAFF MEETING

The monthly meeting agenda is derived from the discussions in the weekly leadership meetings. All workers should be asked to attend the monthly meeting. It is a time for vision casting, setting and evaluating departmental goals, addressing departmental policy and procedure, and expressing appreciation.

RECRUITING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

It is important to perform a background check on each worker in the department. This can be done through the local police department or another agency. Because N&PS workers deal primarily with minor children, it is imperative that there is nothing in their background that would disqualify them from working with infants and children. Under NO circumstances should anyone with a pedophilic background be allowed to work in this department.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The very nature of a children's department is to create a safe place for infants and children to grow and develop. There may be times when a worker discovers a suspicious mark on a child and feels the need to report it. This should be handled in a private meeting with the director only. If a worker or a child is involved in a life-threatening situation, the director should inform the leadership staff of the department and the church office. In either case, the church office will then assume responsibility for following up with the appropriate action.

The same level of trust should be exercised between the leadership staff and workers. Issues discussed in meetings or with another leader should remain confidential. If the levels of trust and communication break down, the leadership team will become dysfunctional. If a person breaks the trust of a child or leader, the director should deal with it effectively, but privately.

The Scriptural mandate for handling this type of conflict is Matthew 18:15-20. Subsequent to accountability, if the person repents, restore the position. If confidentiality is breached again, the worker should be dismissed. Note: If the level of trust that was breached on the first offense creates a trust issue with the church, the leader or worker may need to be dismissed.

COMMITMENT AND DEPENDABILITY

It is imperative to the success of the N&PS program that leaders and workers fulfill the duties and responsibilities for their position at the time they are scheduled to work. In addition, it is a requirement for all leaders and workers to attend at least two regular worship services per month. Attendance is mandatory for weekly and monthly staff meetings and any special meetings, given proper notice. If anyone is unable to attend, he or she should notify the director. If a leader continues to be absent from regular meetings and the weekly program schedule, he or she will need to be replaced. People cannot follow an absent leader.

TEAM BUILDING

All members of the team must feel that they are a significant part of the unit. Diversity is the strength of a group that allows everyone to experience the many facets of the N&PS program. No *one* person can do all the work in a ministry. Several methods and exercises can be used to help bring together the diverse gifts of the leadership team. By asking them to do group tasks, they will learn interdependence. In addition to exercises, celebrating the successes of the group, whether small or large, will also build momentum within the department.

There are various enjoyable team-building exercises that can create a positive and memorable experience for the group. Here are a few examples:

Exercise 1—Use LEGO® building blocks or Lincoln logs to build a house.

Exercise 2—Create a scrapbook.

Exercise 3—Make a department photo album or bulletin board.

Exercise 4—Take a trip together.

Exercise 5—Make a PowerPoint commercial to use in advertising the N&PS ministry.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

ABSENTEE POLICY

When a leader, worker or teacher is going to be absent, the appropriate team leader should be notified as soon as possible. In case of an emergency where they do not have time to give ample notice, the following steps should be used:

1. Call another volunteer to switch schedules.
2. Call a substitute to find a replacement.
3. Call the team leader and report the absence and any other changes made to the schedule regarding switches or substitutions.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

The monthly newsletter is a great way to stay connected with the parents. It usually consists of items such as future events, birthdays of children and N&PS staff, articles of particular interest to parents, budget items, parenting tips, interesting Web sites, and special classes offered by the N&PS for parents. There could even be a featured section that offers baby items for sale or donations to benefit buyers and sellers. The bottom line is that the newsletter should be something the parents look forward to reading each month, or otherwise it will be discarded.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONAL CLASSES

N&PS is not just about taking care of children. It is also a ministry to the parents. As a ministry to the parents, it is good for the department to occasionally sponsor a seminar for parents. It could be a one-hour class offered during the Wednesday night program or even a Saturday morning breakfast and lecture. A few subjects and ideas that might be of interest to parents include the following topics:

- Eating habits and nutrition
- Childhood development
- Typical childhood diseases
- Cooking for toddlers
- A night of funny stories told by mothers and grandmothers
- Decorating tips for the home nursery
- Scrapbooking ideas
- Question-and-answer session with a guest pediatrician to answer questions on infants and/or children's health
- Have a photographer take baby pictures.
- Have an artist paint a portrait of a mother and child while talking to the group.
- Feature a list of secondhand clothes stores and networks.
- Have a nurse do a class on preventive measures of health and safety.
- Hold a how-to workshop for dads to build a toy or storage chest for the new baby. This could become a family heirloom.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Typically, women are viewed as the primary caregivers for babies and children, but many nurseries are beginning to see the advantage of volunteer dads. If the N&PS Department stresses the importance of parent involvement during their children's developmental years, many times both parents will volunteer to work. Having the dads involved is a great statement to the church, but best of all, it provides the children with great role models.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNIFORMS

Uniforms are important for many reasons. First, they protect clothing from typical accidents that occur in the N&PS Department. Second, they offer a sense of professionalism to the department. Third, they offer a security measure. If you see a person in a classroom without a uniform, most likely he or she is not authorized to be there and can be easily spotted. Finally, uniforms offer the parents a sense of security. A uniformed staff looks like a well-trained and well-organized group of individuals. Most uniforms for the N&PS are as simple as a smock for the ladies and a vest for the men. Some churches provide a pullover shirt for all of the staff, and they have a standard dress of khakis with the staff shirt. In that case, some people choose to bring other clothing to change into after church.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTREACH AND MISSIONS AT AN EARLY AGE

It should be the objective of N&PS to network and make financial contributions to outreach and missions programs. A great idea is to sponsor a child at an orphanage home or overseas missions program. The child's picture can be put on the bulletin board so the children can send colored pages. This will broaden the children's perspective to see the world around them. It will help to mold their nurturing and caring skills while their hearts are innocent and pure.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement automatically increases the numbers to every activity. It helps to provide open communication lines with the department and, overall, improves the quality of the program. It also brings more money to the department. Involved and enthusiastic parents are great donors. The budgets of N&PS departments that connect with the parents are notably higher than the ones where notes are simply sent home by the teachers. Parents should be informed of all activities through receipt of the monthly newsletter. It should be mailed to their home address to make them feel like the department is communicating directly with them.

1. *Special Meetings.* Special meetings should be called occasionally just to give parents information and allow them to ask questions. The meetings can be brief and child care should be provided.

2. *Appreciation Banquets.* Some N&PS departments have an annual appreciation banquet for the parents, to say "thank you" to the ones who pay for most of their ministry. This courtesy is very much appreciated. It's also a great time to cast the vision and debut future events and plans.

3. *The Parents' Handbook.* Remember to keep the handbook brief and to the point. A brochure may be just as effective. Things to include in the handbook or brochure are as follows:

- The sign-in and sign-out procedure
- Safety policies
- An explanation of the structure for the department

- Policies pertaining to diaper changes and labeling baby bottles
- The wellness guidelines that clearly define the policy about bringing a sick child to an environment when the child is still contagious
- The emergency exit plan
- Parent notification system
- An explanation about the newsletter
- A question-and-answer section
- Contact numbers for questions and notifications
- An appeal for parents to volunteer
- An introduction of the leadership staff (be sure to include pictures)
- Calendar of events for the year
- A section on the who, where and how to express issues of concern
- The need for parental involvement

Worker and/or Parents Appreciation Banquet

Appreciation banquets can be held anytime during the year. They usually include the leadership, teachers and volunteers, along with their spouses. A holiday banquet is always a nice way to end the year. The easiest way to provide a banquet is to network with another ministry in the church. They are usually thrilled to do this as a service and sometimes as a fund-raiser. They can prepare and serve your staff while you enjoy celebrating your accomplishments of the year. A small gift is also a nice way to show added gratitude.

You may want to do something as simple as an ice cream social, or as elaborate as a meal with an ambient setting. As a special reward, create a point system that is based on attendance and participation in called meetings throughout the year. You may even want to have a grand prize giveaway and drawing for all workers at the banquet. A nice gift like a weekend trip and shopping spree will guarantee that all the workers attend.

SPECIAL DAYS AND EVENTS

PROMOTION DAY

After a child completes kindergarten, he or she is promoted to the next level of children's ministry, which starts with first grade. A special ceremony is usually held for all of those being promoted in the church. Children are typically presented with a certificate and sometimes a children's Bible at the promotion ceremony.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

There is usually a service or program at Christmastime that features the children. At this service, the Preschool Department generally does some type of simple presentation to represent their group. In many larger churches where the children perform a musical, typically preschool children come out in costume to join a song toward the end of the musical.

EASTER EXTRAVAGANZA

Easter is a time to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. It is also a time when children get together for a spring party that usually includes a game of egg-hunting. When possible, a large park is usually secured where the children can enjoy a morning of play that includes games, refreshments and prizes. The main event is usually the game of hunting plastic, candy or hard-boiled colored eggs. This event usually draws large crowds from the community as well as the church family, and can be utilized as an outreach ministry. Most of the time, the crowd-drawing event is the prize giveaway. Many churches give away large items like bikes, battery-operated vehicles or family passes to a theme park in the area. It works best if there is at least one big prize for the N&PS and one big prize for older children.

FUND-RAISERS

In order to keep the N&PS program operating on a high quality level, many churches try to offset their budgets with fund-raisers. Fund-raising events help purchase additional toys, material and equipment that may not be included in the church's operating budget. There are always the traditional bake sales and dinners that do OK; however, new and innovative ideas are emerging all the time.

Here are a few ideas:

- Family photo sessions
- Auctions
- Dinner theaters with child singers performing
- Holiday fund-raisers such as the sale of Christmas trees or fruit baskets
- Mother's Day events, such as, selling flowers or specialty items
- Selling items on eBay to raise funds
- Garage sales
- Local businesses sometimes sell discount cards for meals at local restaurants or discounts at local retailers.

As a nursery and preschool leader, worker or volunteer, you are helping to lay a solid foundation of lifelong Christian values in a child's life with a potential of touching thousands of lives. We have provided examples and suggestions of tried-and-true methods to initiate and operate a well-functioning Nursery and Preschool Ministry. Remember, the operative word is *ministry*—you are ministering to children and their families.

WHAT IS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

In the ever-changing and exciting world of children, there are many expectations. They want an identity, a place of their own, and a fast-paced, high-energy, high-tech world all to themselves. But they want it with the right mixture of tradition and training. In a nutshell, children's ministry is a miniature version of a church.

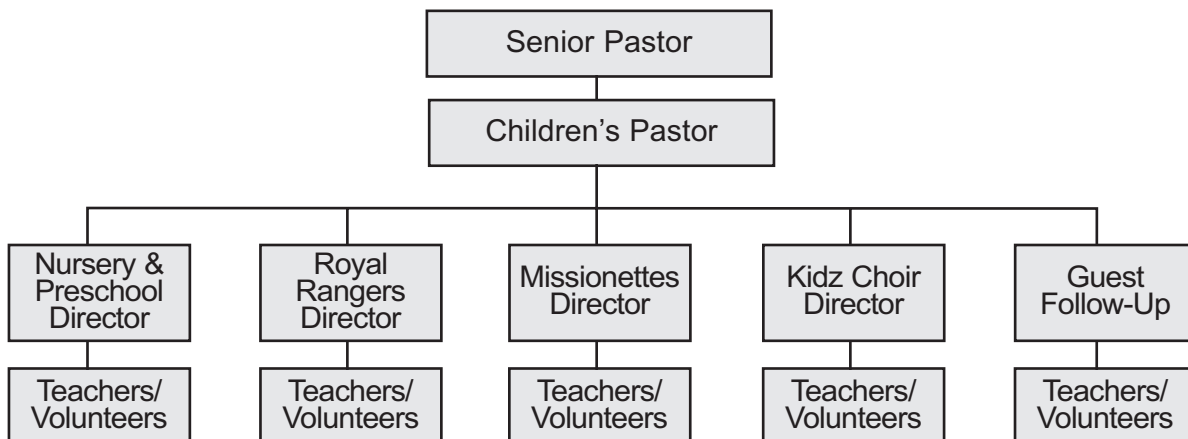
Martin Vanbee said, "The kind of world we live in tomorrow depends, not partially, but entirely upon the quality of the education of our children today." That is true in Christian education as well. We need to provide quality ministry and training for our children on a regular basis.

Ministry to children can be done in many ways. Puppets, characters, game rooms, video games, ministry teams, small groups, and after-school tutoring are just a few examples of effective methods to reach children. In order to develop a cutting-edge children's ministry, it is important to think outside the traditional box of yesterday. While children need traditions to ground them, the methods of the past do not relate to children who are growing up in a high-tech world. To keep their attention, we need to be able to enter their world and relate to their everyday environment.

HOW IS A CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ORGANIZED?

There are many ways to organize a children's ministry. The most important issue is actual organization as opposed to disorganization. In many churches, children's ministry is comprised of children 6 weeks old through sixth grade. This includes nursery, preschool, Kidz Church, and the discipleship program (some use boys' and girls' clubs, such as Royal Rangers and Missionettes). The children's pastor (or leader) usually reports directly to the senior pastor or the administrative pastor, depending on the church's leadership structure. From there, all other children's ministry directors report to the children's pastor. To even further expand the organizational chart, all classroom or team leaders report to their specific ministry director.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



THE VALUE OF A GRADED PROGRAM

To effectively minister to children, we must take into consideration and be able to meet the needs of the wide variety of ages, temperaments, maturity levels and family backgrounds. It is best to tackle these challenges with a graded system. I do not mean A's and B's, like on a school report card, but rather age or grade levels used as a stepping-stone program that progresses into the next level as the child gets older.

Children should be placed in a graded program, with the flexibility to subdivide further and create additional same-grade classes, if necessary. Placing a 12-year-old child and a 2-year-old child together in the same one-hour class would defeat the purpose of effective teaching. The children could become irritable or frustrated with each other. Neither child would want to come back the next week for another round of boredom and frustration. Our children deserve the best possible learning environment when it comes to their eternal education.

NURSERY AND PRESCHOOL

So many of the things learned by children at the nursery and preschool level depend on where they are in their developmental stage. For that reason, do not put them in one big room and call it the nursery. A children's ministry team should create an environment that provides opportunities to learn and allows growth in all areas based on the level of motor skills, language skills, hand-eye coordination, and so on. All of the programs should include a program that encourages and nurtures spiritual growth. Below is a suggested age division for nursery and preschool children to provide the easiest and smoothest transition based on researched developmental stages:

- 6 weeks to 8 months
- 9 months to 16 months
- 17 months to 24 months
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years to kindergarten

During Sunday morning services, beginning with the 2-years-olds, each age level should be in their own classroom until registration is completed. Each class is then rotated through various learning centers, such as music, puppets, craft, snacks, movie and Bible story so that each group receives an age-appropriate spiritual experience—minus the frustrations that are present when all ages are combined in one room. (Please see the *Nursery and Preschool Handbook* in the *Lay Ministries Training Series* for a more comprehensive plan of this department of children's ministry.)

Wednesdays are a great night for boys' and girls' clubs. There are so many different organizations to choose from, such as Royal Rangers and Missionettes, Awanas, Pioneers for Christ and Blue Belles. These clubs approach discipleship in a fun and adventurous way. The classes are still graded, just slightly different. Following is a list of how nursery to preschool Royal Rangers and Missionettes are graded:

- 3-year-old boys and girls—Rainbows
- 4- to 5-year-old boys and girls—Rainbows
- Kindergarten girls—Daisies
- Kindergarten boys—Ranger Kids

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

During Sunday morning worship services, either offer a complete worship experience in a customized Kidz Church or get the children involved in the adult worship service, then dismiss them to their own children's church service. Children in grades 1-6 are incorporated into a worship service that gets them actively involved in worship, Scripture memorization and prayer. Then God's Word is shared in a variety of ways, using puppets, zany characters, drama, object lessons and more.

In Kidz Church, be sensitive to the different levels of maturity and understanding, and the needs of the diverse age groups in one meeting place. As the ministry grows, it may be necessary to divide Kidz Church into two different worship services. Some programs divide their service into first- through third-grade children, and fourth-through sixth-grade children.

The key is to ensure that all children are taken into the presence of the Lord, and that the experience leads them to desire more of Him.

On Wednesday nights, if the Royal Rangers and Missionettes program is chosen as the organizational plan, the classes are divided in the following manner:

1st grade boys—Ranger Kids
2nd grade boys—Ranger Kids
3rd grade boys—Discovery Rangers
4th grade boys—Discovery Rangers
5th grade boys—Discovery Rangers
6th grade boys—Adventure Rangers

1st - 2nd grade girls—Prims
3rd - 5th grade girls—Stars
6th grade girls—Friends

This plan offers a smaller student-teacher ratio. The model takes more classroom space and can sometimes be better accommodated on a rotating schedule if the church doesn't have adequate space. For instance, the church can operate on a schedule from 7 to 8 p.m. and from 8 to 9 p.m. By running two separate tracks, the same classroom can be used twice. In order to effectively implement a rotating schedule, a common area is needed that can be filled with games or videos so children that are not in classrooms have a place to gather. Another activity for a common area could be a music or drama class.

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

THE CHILDREN'S PASTOR

The children's pastor who is called to minister to children has a strong passion to reach children in the community. Here is a simple job description outlining the duties and responsibilities of the children's pastor.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Conduct weekly worship services for children.

- Recruit, train, and monitor all ministry leaders in the following areas: characters, crowd control, hospitality, lighting, puppetry, sound, special effects, video and Welcome Wagon.
- Ensure that these areas of ministry remain vital, productive and staffed with well-trained lay leaders.
- Publish a monthly newsletter informing the families of upcoming events.
- Maintain proper accounting and budgeting for the department.
- Maintain the proper decorum for the children's sanctuary as an exciting environment, complete with adequate supplies and proper room decorations.
- Purchase and maintain puppets, character costumes, lights and audio/visual equipment for the children's sanctuary.
- Purchase and maintain adequate curriculum as needed.
- Promote and conduct weekly prayer meetings.
- Conduct monthly staff meetings with all ministry leaders.

KIDZ CHOIR

- Recruit, train and staff lay leaders who will help the children enhance their talents and provide an opportunity for ministry in the following areas: choir, Junior Talent, musicals, and the praise and worship band.
- Order and maintain an adequate supply of music.
- Purchase and maintain musical instruments for praise team.
- Conduct monthly staff meetings with all ministry leaders.

MISSIONETTES

- Recruit, train and monitor a director to oversee the weekly classes, ensuring all classes are adequately supplied with curriculum, teaching tools and working equipment.

The director will then . . .

- Recruit, train and monitor all teachers in Missionettes.
- Monitor and assign rooms for classes.
- Schedule events and outings that coincide with earning patches, badges and levels of achievement within the curriculum.
- Maintain proper accounting and budgeting for said department.
- Ensure that this program remains vital, productive and staffed with well-trained lay leaders.
- Conduct a monthly director's meeting.
- Conduct an annual graduation ceremony.

ROYAL RANGERS

- Recruit, train and monitor a director to oversee the weekly classes, ensuring all classes are adequately supplied with curriculum, teaching tools and working equipment.

The director will then . . .

- Recruit, train and monitor all teachers in Royal Rangers.
- Monitor and assign rooms for classes.
- Schedule events and outings that coincide with earning patches, badges and levels of achievement within the curriculum.
- Maintain proper accounting and budgeting for the department.

- Ensure that this program remains vital, productive and staffed with well-trained lay leaders.
- Conduct a monthly director's meeting.
- Conduct an annual graduation ceremony.

NURSERY AND PRESCHOOL

- Recruit, train and monitor a director for the nursery and preschool ministry.
- Conduct weekly meetings with director.

The director will then . . .

- Publish a brochure and other effective advertisement in order to properly orientate the congregation with nursery and preschool policies, events and staffing needs.
- Conduct an annual graduation ceremony.

GUEST FOLLOW-UP

- Develop and maintain visitor follow-up procedures.
- Recruit, train and monitor ministry leaders to follow through with the program.
- Purchase and maintain adequate supply of all materials for letters, postcards, newsletters, envelopes and postage.
- Input all guest information into the database weekly.
- Conduct monthly meetings with all ministry leaders.

ANNUAL ACTIVITIES

- Recruit, train and monitor lay leaders who will assist in annual activities.
- Conduct a Kids Crusade.
- Conduct an Easter event.
- Conduct a Halloween alternative for children and their families.
- Conduct monthly social activities for the children.

The children's pastor must know and be ready to follow the vision and mission to which God has called the church. He or she must be teachable, movable and flexible. He or she must be willing to give when the tank is empty, keep smiling in the face of adversity, and stay level-headed in a crisis. Above all, the children's pastor should model responsibility and Christianity to the children at all times.

THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADERS

It is important to understand the matrix that forms the leadership ideal of our nation. The formula is simple:

- Workers report to leaders.
- Leaders report to managers.
- Managers report to administrators.
- Administrators report to executives.

When it comes to structuring a children's ministry, it is important for the children's pastor to seek out leaders and not just workers. Good leaders will find the workers for their team. A good children's pastor is one who can recruit, train and release good leaders. Leaders are the backbone of the children's ministry. You must find those within the church who have leadership qualities. Without leadership, any organization will crumble. As John Maxwell says, "Everything rises and falls on leadership."

It is the leaders who will find the workers within the ministry. It is much easier to find people who are willing to work in ministry, but the job of the children's pastor is to pursue those who can lead. Leaders will allow the ministry to expand and grow.

In the military, there are officers and enlisted soldiers. The soldiers have good common sense, and know how to fight. However, the officers tell them where to fight. A great officer will not take soldiers to war without first making sure they are well prepared for battle. In many ways, leadership within the children's ministry is the same. Great leaders prepare and equip the workforce to be ready for all that will be accomplished in ministry.

THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY WORKERS

As with any organization, there must be frontline people. In children's ministry, there will never be enough workers. Even if the church has a waiting list for children's ministry volunteers, never stop recruiting more helpers. The more workers there are, the better quality program there will be with less burnout, more creative ministry, a wider scope of the importance of the ministry, and so on.

Workers can be the best advertisers of the department. If they are properly motivated and properly appreciated, they will sing the praises of the leadership and the department. In most cases, workers are volunteers. They have families, jobs, children of their own, classes to attend, and so on. Always be ready to *ask* for their help—do not demand it. They must be treated as the church's greatest asset.

THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP MEETING

It is important for the leaders of all the ministry teams to get together on a monthly basis, at the very least. This meeting time is ideal for corporate prayer, fellowship, planning and scheduling events, and helping to keep the leadership fresh for ministry. The meeting that has proven to be the most effective is one where all key leaders meet with the children's pastor, who directs the meeting and has each department leader give a report. They discuss any challenges they may be facing, as well as give praise reports. This is also the time to share future ideas and plans for the entire ministry.

Every meeting should begin with the end in mind. Do not let the meetings get carried away with long, meaningless conversation. Most of the leaders will be sacrificing family time to attend. The children's pastor should keep the team on track. The members should leave the meeting feeling better about their part in ministry, with a greater sense of team camaraderie in the group as a whole, and a better overall picture of how the ministry is doing.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR A CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADER

At the very minimum, each of the candidates for leadership should be Christians who are tithing members of the church, who agree with the church's Statement of Faith, and who know and agree with the mission and vision statements of the church. All leaders should complete any prerequisite classes or training offered by the church assimilation program.

Children's leaders should have a deep passion to minister and develop the children under their influence. They must be able to distinguish between the nature of a church environment that depends heavily on its volunteers and a secular environment that works mostly with paid employees.

REQUIRED SKILLS

- Spiritually and emotionally mature
- Good attitude at all times

- Good people skills
- Good problem-solving skills
- Good communication skills—Communication can make or break a program.
- General computer skills
- Good organizational skills
- Good networking skills—Find ways to network with other ministries.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR A CHILDREN’S MINISTRY WORKER

At the very minimum, each of the workers should be Christians, who are tithing members of the church, who agree with the church’s Statement of Faith, and who know and agree with the mission and vision statements of the church. All workers should complete any prerequisite classes or training offered by the church assimilation program.

SKILLS NEEDED

- Spiritually and emotionally mature
- Good attitude
- Good people skills
- Trainable

RECRUITMENT AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

Many churches host annual ministry fairs that enable those in the church body to learn more about individual ministries. It is a great opportunity to make the children’s ministry visible. In addition to the ministry fair, ask ministry team members to commit to finding at least one new recruit for the ministry. There’s no better way to recruit than an excited new team member “selling” the ministry to all those within his or her scope of influence.

NINE-STEP PROCESS

1. *Initial contact.* A person may have an interest in serving God by loving children, but may be unsure where or how to help. The interested person should contact a worker or leader, who in turn will give the volunteer’s name to the children’s pastor for follow-up. Some of the most “unlikely people” make the greatest children’s workers, so take the next step while prayerfully considering this ministry.

2. *Receive children’s ministry material packet.* The children’s pastor will send a packet to the interested worker. This packet provides the basic information that will help the volunteer make decisions about the ministry.

3. *Connect 100 Series classes.* Sign up for any courses the church may require for all church workers. These classes are usually designed to help members determine their spiritual gifts and personality traits. These courses also inform them about the mission and vision of the local church. Upon completion of the course, notify the children’s pastor.

4. *Observe programs.* As a part of the training, workers are asked to attend and observe the ministry before making their final decision. This gives the children’s pastor an opportunity to observe their interaction with the children.

5. *Complete the workers' application for the children's department.* Background checks are standard procedure for anyone who wishes to work with children. The application allows the department leader to obtain appropriate information for the screening process. Applicants should give two references: a close friend or an employer within the past year. In addition, a pastoral reference is required.

6. *Interview with children's pastor/nursery director.* This is an opportunity for the volunteers to share their observations, explain their spiritual journey, and to communicate their gifts and desires for working in children's ministry. They can discuss a more specific position that fits their abilities and strengths based on the following: spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality and opportunities available.

7. *Return signed commitment card.* The person is advised to seek the counsel of family members or friends regarding their commitment to the ministry and the time involved. After the decision is made to commit, the volunteer should sign the commitment card and return it to a children's ministry staff member.

8. *Ministry training.* Once the signed commitment card is received, the candidate will be properly trained for the specific ministry position. The amount of time required for training will vary, depending on the ministry position chosen.

9. *Begin ministry/evaluations.* Once a beginning date has been established and the training process has been completed, they are ready to go. A 30-day evaluation meeting is a great way to make sure they have been connected to the right team.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF A CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADER

There are times when leaders encounter difficult situations. Make sure all leaders understand any matters discussed in meetings are of a confidential nature and should not be discussed with anyone outside the meeting setting.

In ministry, there are times when an individual feels safe enough to talk about personal issues to their ministry team. Discussing these issues publicly could damage the valuable individual and cause distrust among the team members or the entire department.

COMMITMENT AND DEPENDABILITY OF A CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADER

The "leadership by example" model is the best model for on-the-job training. Leaders should be the most dependable and committed people on the team. Using the analogy of the military again, if the soldiers left their families to fight a war and all the officers stayed home, the soldiers would soon look for ways to leave and get back home.

Leaders provide stability and strength to the team. All of the leaders need to be in place when the workers are there so the team can move smoothly in the right direction and in a timely manner.

TEAM BUILDING

Building a team is key to the success of the ministry. There's no better way to do this than by first building relationships. Quarterly gatherings within the smaller teams will strengthen them. Annual ministry-team retreats, or appreciation nights, are also a great way to motivate and encourage the team. Any event that allows the entire children's ministry team to get together and celebrate the accomplishments and goals will give increased momentum. Times of vision-casting and goal-setting for the upcoming year are also necessary to provide purpose and energy.

Leaders should continue building their teams throughout the year with activities, letters, gifts, memos, and so on, that will let the team members know they are appreciated and part of the bigger-team picture.

THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES CALENDAR

DAILY

Birthday card mail-outs
Guest follow-up
Hospital visitations

WEEKLY

Sunday morning worship services
Kidz Choir practice
Boys' and Girls' Club/Discipleship Classes
S.H.A.P.E. Class—Sixth-grade students—Student Leadership
Spiritual gifts, **H**eart, **A**bilities, **P**ersonality, **E**xperience

MONTHLY

Director's meeting
All-church leadership meeting
Ministry team meeting
Main event—either all children or boys'/girls' club

QUARTERLY

Goals review
Team-building exercises
Ministry team training

ANNUALLY

CPR training
Kidz Crusade
Camp
Kidfest
Easter Eggstravaganza
Winter musical
Spring musical
YWEA—missions fund-raiser
Caramel apples—girls' club fund-raiser
Appreciation banquet
See You at the Pole—prayer at school flagpoles
Annual training

SMALL GROUPS

A *small group* is technically defined as “a group of 5 to 12 individuals who are engaged in the same purpose, such as a committee, Bible study group, fellowship group, service group, special-interest group or ministry group.”

While an age-old concept, small groups are one of the primary organizational strategies of the postmodern church. By creating small groups for children to get involved in, they will form friendships and learn skills that are otherwise impossible in the large corporate setting. Small groups for children are unique and require an adult leader. Here are a few ideas for small groups that work in children's ministry:

- Set-up Committee
- Prayer Committee
- Praise Team
- Welcome Committee
- Public Relations Committee (to advertise events)
- Snack Committee
- Craft Set-up Committee
- Encouragers Committee
- Student Follow-up Committee
- Photography Club
- Bulletin Board Club
- Editorial Club
- Class Officers
- Fund-raising Committee
- Bible Study Groups
- SHAPE Classes
- Kids Clubs

PRAISE TEAM AND BAND

Children love to sing and worship. Create a rotating worship team to give the children an opportunity to find their gifts and talents. Most children's worship services include the use of CDs or a worship DVD, but live music is always the best. There are many talented people within the congregation, so find someone who can play the piano or keyboard or maybe even a guitar. As the ministry grows, you will find children who are talented vocalists and gifted instrumentalists.

Weekly or biweekly practices will generally work for the children's ministry without draining time from their families. It also creates a great small-group environment for friendship and social interaction.

SOUND TECHNICIANS

We suggest that one to four adults be recruited to run the sound system. Usually, there are teens who are capable and willing to help. Involving teens is good practice, but it is essential to have an adult leader of the children's sound ministry. Have some type of background music playing at all times, or perhaps some sound effects in order to keep a good flow and prevent "dead spots" in the service or program. Dead spots are ideal places for children to get bored, act up or get distracted.

THE CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Every parent loves to see their child sing and get involved. If children are encouraged to sing early on in their church experience and get involved in singing as a natural part of worship, there will be no problem starting a

children's ensemble or choir. It is most effective when it is part of the regular children's service schedule. Many children's choirs practice on Sunday evenings.

The children's choir performances can be as simple as learning a song to sing for the church or as elaborate as a full-blown children's musical with sets, music tracks and dramatization. There is no limit. This type of ministry within the children's department will energize the children's ministry and also provide an avenue of exposure for the whole church.

REGISTRATION AND FOLLOW-UP

As our world continues to grow, it becomes more important to be informed about the children within your ministry. Many families will come into the church and drop their children off with the ministry team, and expect a certain level of security. Each child should be registered, complete with parents' names, contact numbers, and ongoing records of attendance, spiritual growth, medical or special needs, allergies, and so on.

It is suggested that some sort of computerized database system be kept and updated as needed. There are many database programs on the market today, so finding one that would work best for your particular environment should not be difficult. This will also make it much easier to follow up with guests. When properly maintained, the database will help keep all of the information on the child as he or she grows and allow for greater security measures, such as who should or shouldn't be picking up the child.

One major mistake in children's ministry is thinking that the church secretary needs to follow up with your ministry guests. No one knows the ins and outs of the children's ministry better than the ministry team. Develop a Guest Follow-up team that will create a multi-step program dedicated to following up with children. If your church currently has a good system, then copy the policies and procedures of that program to plug in information and contacts.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

The best way to communicate to the families of the church is through bulletins, flyers and newsletters. Send out a monthly newsletter to keep everyone informed of activities, new programs, upcoming events, and even policy or procedural changes within the ministry. It is also a great place to provide family information, such as tips on raising children and safety reminders. Keep it looking great with colorful clip art, games for the children, and so on. This is also a great tool to use when following up with guests.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTREACH AND MISSIONS

Like any other group, children need to be involved in missions and in reaching out to the community. There is no benevolence like that of a child. They are able to teach us so much about sharing and caring for the world around us, if we will just ignite the spark within them.

Some great ways to get children involved in outreach include writing letters to the missionaries sponsored by the church and creating pen pals with children in an orphanage.

Other programs include:

- Canned food drives
- Clothing drives
- Toys for Tots
- Adopt-a-Grandparent

- Adopt-a-Child
- YWEA mission projects
- Short-term mission trips
- Adopt-a-Missionary

There are so many more ways to get them involved. Do not get locked into a box when trying to do this. Maybe the best way to start is with “Friendship Evangelism.” Simply stated, it is the children working together to do something for a neighborhood, such as . . .

- Pick a group of homes and rake the leaves (not yards of church members)
- Hand out bottled water to customers outside of a grocery store
- Have a free car wash to say “Thank you!” or “We care about you” to those in the community.

STAYING CONNECTED WITH THE CHILDREN

It is important to stay connected to the children within the ministry. They will be the ones to continue to bring more children in. Create a sense of belonging and a caring environment so that the children come in to the church knowing it is a safe place and that the people who are sharing the gospel with them actually love them and are not just there to cram spiritual information down their throats.

Here is a list of some of the ways to accomplish this:

- Send letters from the children’s pastor and other ministry team members.
- Make phone calls.
- Celebrate talents and accomplishments.
- Attend a child’s game, team or school event.
- Send birthday cards.
- Go to their school and have lunch with them.

SPECIAL DAYS AND EVENTS

- Promotion
- Christmas and spring musicals
- Kidfest
- Summer camp
- Theme nights
- Kidz Crusade
- Easter Eggstravaganza
- Fall Festival
- See You at the Pole

PREPARING THE STUDENTS FOR A STUDENT MINISTRY PROGRAM

PREPARATION

As families get involved in children’s ministry, have an informational session or Children’s Ministry 101 class

to inform them how the ministry works and what programs are offered within the ministry. This is also something to offer to the children as they move up from the nursery and preschool into the elementary-age programs.

DISCIPLESHIP

Before a student leaves a 6- to 10-year program in children's ministries (nursery to sixth grade), the goal is for the student to experience the following:

Student Checklist: Name _____

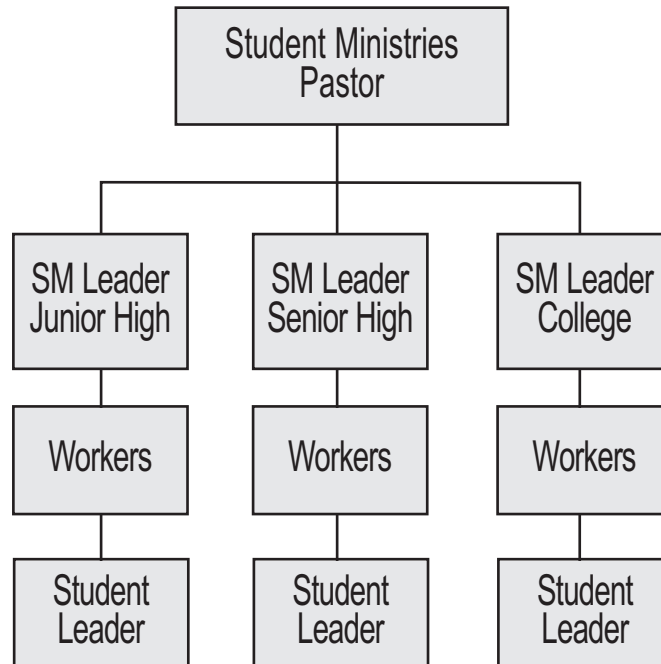
- 2 Kids Crusades
- 1 Kidfest
- Learn the Church Mission Statement
- Memorize 50 Bible verses
- Read the entire Bible
- Learn the Ten Commandments
- Learn the books of the Bible
- Attend one discipleship course
- Name of course: SHAPE Class
- Know the ABCs of salvation
- Lead another child to the Lord
- Be baptized
- Attend at least one camp
- Be filled with the baptism of the Holy Spirit

The goal is always to point the children to their Savior, Jesus Christ. This handbook contains guidelines that have been tried and proven to be effective in winning children to the Lord and instilling in them a lifelong love for Him. Jesus said it best in Matthew 19:14: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." It is our duty—it is our calling to bring the children to Him.

WHAT IS STUDENT MINISTRY?

Student Ministries (SM) is the arm of the local church that exists to offer salvation and to disciple junior high, senior high and college students. For many years, this ministry has been called the Youth Ministry and sometimes the group is still referred to as the youth group. In many churches, most SM groups have adopted a new name to identify themselves.

HOW IS A STUDENT MINISTRY ORGANIZED?



THE VALUE OF A GRADED PROGRAM

There are some programs in SM that are offered only to a particular target group. For instance, a course designed to help students take the ACT or SAT college entrance tests would only be offered to juniors and seniors in high school. A field trip to a job fair would be geared more toward college students. Likewise, the needs and interests of a seventh-grade junior high student vary greatly from those of either a high school or college student.

There are many facets of the program that would not be geared to a specific group. Programs dealing with peer pressure, such as “Just Say No” to drugs, or “Why Wait?” are generic enough to speak into the lives of every age group. Activities and events in general should be available to the whole group, but activities and events should also be available at grade levels to promote peer interaction.

Many larger churches have a junior high pastor, senior high pastor and college pastor. Some churches hire a college pastor for the summer only, when the college students are home for summer break. Regardless of how the group is organized, it is important to recognize the varying degree of needs of students and each level of their developmental stage.

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE STUDENT MINISTRIES

THE STUDENT MINISTRIES PASTOR

The SM pastor oversees the entire SM Department. He or she is responsible to ensure that each area of the ministry is functioning properly. The SM pastor is also the “quality control” person and should make sure that each group functions on the level of excellence expected for the department. Most SM pastors have a job description that details the expectations from the church and pastor. One of the most critical roles of the SM pastor is to recruit and train effective leaders who can help carry out the vision of the SM Department. The ability to train leaders is just as crucial as the ability to relate to and influence students.

THE STUDENT MINISTRY LEADERS

The need for real leaders cannot be overemphasized. Leadership catalyst John Maxwell often says, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” It is true that the difference in a good program and a great program is the quality of its leadership, not its curriculum.

The difference between a leader and a good worker is that the leader has two qualities that sets him or her apart from other workers:

1. The ability to persuade others through influence
2. The ability to recruit, train and manage workers

A good leader will call on others for help and report to the SM pastor at all meetings. A good worker will support a leader when called upon and also knows when to call upon the leader for help or guidance.

A good SM pastor can take a youth group to 50. A great SM pastor can take a group to 100. However, only a great leadership team can grow a group beyond 100 and maintain the growth. It’s vitally important to put effective leaders in place in the SM. If not, the group will be limited by the influence and availability of one man or woman. As the leadership base grows and the leaders are given designated assignments and groups to oversee, the youth group will grow. A good scale for a leader-to-student ratio is 20-1. That means there should be at least one leader for every 20 students in the program. This ratio does not include the SM pastor.

THE STUDENT MINISTRY WORKERS

Good workers are an invaluable resource to student ministry. There are so many tasks that have to be accomplished—mailouts, room set-up, event-planning, food preparation, just to name a few. A good scale for a worker-to-student ratio is 10-1. That means there should be at least one worker for every 10 students in the program. This ratio does not include the SM pastor or SM leaders. Each worker should have a written description of the tasks for which they are responsible. This does not have to be a formal job description. It can be as simple as a document that contains a one-paragraph description of each person’s duties. The description provides clear direction of what is expected and allows everyone to be productive.

THE STUDENT LEADER

Student-led ministry is becoming the new wave of student ministry. SM pastors are recognizing that students can grow to be good leaders and workers and sometimes have more influence over their peers. Choosing a student leader can be difficult, since many students change as they mature. However, identifying a person with influence and natural leadership ability is easy at any age. Many churches form a board for these student leaders called the Student Council, or commonly referred to as “STUCO.” This council meets regularly with the SM pastor and adult leaders to plan and promote the SM. As with other workers, each student leader should receive a written description of the duties and responsibilities of the position.

THE SM LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

There should be a separate meeting for leaders and workers. The leadership meeting should address issues pertaining to groups. The workers meeting will deal with issues pertaining to housekeeping and procedures. Separation of the two keeps meetings focused and time-efficient.

MONTHLY SM LEADERS MEETING

This meeting should be for those in charge of specific areas or groups. The chairman is the SM pastor. It is a time to do a “checkup” to ensure that policies and procedures are in place and are being successfully implemented. It is also effective for planning and training.

MONTHLY SM WORKERS MEETING

This meeting is usually for all workers, or it may be broken down into several group meetings. It is typically a very short meeting to coordinate the calendar of upcoming events and assign duties for the events. It is also a good forum for tweaking issues and solving problems. The meeting should always end on a positive note of motivation and appreciation. This meeting can be chaired by the SM pastor or a designated SM leader.

MONTHLY STUDENT COUNCIL MEETING

Student Council meetings involve the student leaders. Each student leader has an assigned duty and responsibility. At this meeting, the students should give a report for their area of assignment. This is also the place for planning and training. The student council meeting will provide a beneficial experience for the young leaders that they will use throughout their life and career.

BIMONTHLY OR QUARTERLY STAFF MEETING

This meeting is for all SM staff, which includes leaders, workers and student leaders. This can be a very short meeting, but it needs to be designed to motivate the team. This meeting can be filled with team-building exercises and motivational speeches. It is also the best forum in the SM Department for casting the vision for the ministry. If used correctly, this meeting can be a great motivator that will help to jettison the whole group into the future goals.

SELECTION AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

It is mandatory that each worker in the SM Department receive at least a routine background check. This can be

done through the local police department or various agencies. Because SM leaders are working with junior high and senior high students, who are underage, it is important that leaders and workers have nothing in their background that would disqualify them from working with minors.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF A SM LEADER

The very nature of the SM group is to create a safe place for the students to grow and develop. In order for some of them to grow, they may feel the need to unload personal information or issues. When a student confides in a SM leader or worker, the confidence should not be broken. If there is a life-or-death situation or abuse involved, or any plan to commit a crime, the SM pastor should be notified immediately, who will then notify the proper authority.

The same level of trust should be exercised within the leadership groups. Issues discussed in the meetings or with another leader should remain confidential. If the levels of trust and communication break down, the leadership team will become dysfunctional. If individuals break the trust of a student or leader, the SM pastor should speak to them privately. Matthew 18:15-20 is a good Scripture reference for handling this type of conflict. If, after correction the first time, the offense is repeated, the worker should be dismissed. If the level of trust that was breached creates a trust issue with the church or SM pastor, the leader or worker may need to be dismissed on the first offense.

COMMITMENT AND DEPENDABILITY

The SM program depends on each member of the team fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of the assigned position. It is imperative that the leaders attend all SM worship services and activities. If they are unable to attend, they should notify the SM pastor. It is also important that they attend the regular worship services of the church. They need to be spiritually mature individuals in order to lead others. If they have continued absenteeism for SM events or from regular church attendance, they should be replaced. An absent leader cannot lead. People cannot follow someone who is not present.

TEAM BUILDING

Several methods and exercises can be used to help bring the diverse gifts of the leadership team together. Each person on the team must feel a significant part of the unit. Their diversity is the strength that allows the collective group to experience many facets of the SM experience. No one person can do all the work in a ministry. By assigning group tasks, they will learn interdependence. In addition to exercises, celebrating the successes of the group, whether small or large, will also build momentum within the SM.

There are countless team-building exercises that help to create a positive and enjoyable experience for the group. Here are a few examples:

Exercise 1—Use Lego® building blocks or Lincoln logs to build a dream youth center.

Exercise 2—Create a scrapbook of an event.

Exercise 3—Paint a house or room, or do yardwork for an elderly person or someone in need.

Exercise 4—Plan and take a trip.

Exercise 5—Make a PowerPoint commercial to use in advertising.

BREAKING THE 100 BARRIER

For the average-sized church in America, youth groups are around 10 to 20 students. The average-sized church in America is 80 people, so 20 is a high number for a church that has a dynamic leader. Leadership principles confirm that a person with a great personality and minimal skill can lead a church to 100.

This is also true of a youth pastor, even though building a SM group to 100 is much harder than taking a church to 100. The reason for this is that the congregation of the SM group is confined to a predefined age group, many of whom can't drive and don't contribute financially. Therefore, a SM group of 100 is more comparable to a church of 300 to 500 people. (This figure was determined from the 30-20-20-30 theory. It simply means that most churches are made up of 30 percent under 12; 20 percent from 12 to 25; 20 percent from 25 to 50; and 30 percent from 50 and above.)

As stated earlier, a good youth pastor can take a group to 50. A great youth pastor can take a group to 100, but you can only move beyond the 100 barrier with a great leadership team. The majority of youth pastors put most of the energy into the SM worship service and the SM activities. Building personal relationships can take you to 100. However, it does not contain enough structure to take you beyond 100.

Structure is the thing that no one sees in a building, but it is the very thing supporting and holding everything together. Churches are the same way. Without a supporting structure, you constantly ride the attendance roller coaster. A SM group—which has an average annual attendance of 100—cannot grow beyond the influence of the youth pastor if the five major structure areas are not addressed. These five areas do not address the SM worship service or activities; those are usually a given. The following are structural entities only:

1. Finances
2. Small Groups
3. Leadership Development
4. Parental Involvement
5. College Involvement

FINANCES

Unless a church is given a healthy budget, most SM groups live from fund-raiser to fund-raiser. They never have additional funds to do anything significant. Most SM groups live at the mercy of the deacon board or occasional donations. Building a financial base is the difference in doing good things and doing great things.

Most youth pastors never have to do what senior pastors have to do, such as build buildings and raise enormous budgets. But in those rare cases where the youth pastor is also a good businessperson, it's a different story. These youth groups have state-of-the-art equipment and facilities—not because the church gave it to them, but because the Youth Department has a steady income base. A thriving youth group should have at least four sources of income. Here are a few ideas for building a financial base:

- Operate a weekly concession stand.
- Build a parent-based booster club.
- Receive a monthly budget from the church.

- Operate a business, such as a coffee shop or snow cone stand.
- Apply for grants.
- Seek out a major corporate donation of \$10,000 and above.
- Get sponsored by a local businessmen's group.
- Get sponsored by a local women's organization.
- Get involved in government-sponsored programs.

SMALL GROUPS

If a SM wants to grow, it must have small groups. Only so much can be accomplished in a corporate group setting, even if they do have the “coolest” SM pastor in town. There are always individuals in the big crowd who feel alone and left out. These kids eventually drop out or leave as soon as they are out on their own. Small groups can drastically change this statistic.

For more information on forming small groups, refer to the Small Groups Ministry Handbook in this Lay Ministries Training System.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership development is an ongoing process. It involves field trips, conventions and seminars to book reads, and lots of “in-house” seminars held by the youth pastor. The key is to develop a program of process that is required for all SM leaders. That way every leader receives the same training. The challenge with many leadership development processes is that everyone did not attend the same seminar or go on the same trip that affected the paradigm of the group. Development is about a required prerequisite that certifies you to lead.

A great way to ensure everyone gets the same training is to create a manual. Another way is to use video or DVD lessons. The key is to get everyone on the same page and operating at an optimal skill level.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Without the support of parents, many students will drop out or simply not stay involved. Parental involvement automatically increases the numbers to every activity. It also keeps good communication lines open with the SM pastor. There is a notable difference in the students whose parents encourage them to participate and the ones who do not.

While parent involvement will get more kids there, it also brings more money to the SM. Involved and enthusiastic parents are great donors. The budget of SM groups where parents are included is notably higher than the ones where notes are simply sent home by the students. Parents should be informed of all activities by receiving the monthly newsletter. This needs to be mailed to the home of the parents to make them feel like the SM department is communicating directly with them.

Special Meetings. When the SM group is going out of town, there should be an information meeting called to give parents all the vital details for the trip. This will cause parents to feel safe and comfortable about the trip and will ensure their full cooperation and support in future events.

Appreciation Banquets. Some SM groups have an annual appreciation banquet for the parents to say “thank you” to the ones who pay for most of their ministry. This courtesy is always well received. It’s also a great time to cast the vision for the ministry and debut future events and plans.

The Parents’ Handbook. The Parents’ Handbook is a great way to keep parents informed. It is usually small and contains the policies and procedures of the SM group. Items such as payment deadlines, who to make checks payable to for events and trips, and cancellation notifications are usually detailed in the handbook.

COLLEGE INVOLVEMENT

A wealth of resources is usually dumped or totally overlooked by most youth groups. Those resources are called college students. Many churches simply do not know what to do with them, so they do nothing. However, churches that see this group as an asset and not a liability, tap into a new energy and influence for their SM group. Christ Church in Nashville, Tennessee, uses their college students as student mentors. They sing in their 150-voice youth choir and participate in the activities. As a matter of fact, they hire additional college students each summer just to work with their SM group and choir. These energetic influences bring a whole new energy to the scene. The mentors are assigned to groups of students, and they work with them all summer, and even serve as pen pals throughout the year.

Involving college students gives the SM group a sense of maturity. It gives the leadership a mature group of workers and it gives the students someone to look up to. There is a wealth of resources for sporting events, activities, music, drama and planning that comes from the minds of those who still love their SM group but have gone away to college.

This also helps to turn around a national statistic that as many as 60 percent of students leave the church after they leave the SM group.

THE STUDENT MINISTRIES CALENDAR

WEEKLY

- The SM Worship Service
- Drama Team Rehearsal
- Small Groups
- Discipleship Classes

MONTHLY

- Junior High Activity
- Senior High Activity
- College Activity
- Total Group Activity

- Leadership Meeting
- Student Council Meeting
- SM Workers Meeting

QUARTERLY

- SM Staff Meeting (all leaders and workers)
- Vision Casting

ANNUALLY

- Training Seminar (all leaders)
- Book Discussion Groups

STUDENT MINISTRIES

DRAMA TEAMS

The drama teams are involved in activities such as miming, human videos, skits and mini-videos. There can be as many teams as you need or desire. Some groups divide their teams into Junior High teams, Senior High teams and College teams. Each week in the SM worship service, one of the teams will perform. They are also used in the main worship services of the church, as well as for outreach, evangelism and external church events.

PRAISE TEAM AND BAND

The Praise Team and Band are usually made up of student musicians and singers. They meet regularly to rehearse and usually minister at the weekly SM worship service.

SOUND TECHNICIANS AND SM MEDIA MINISTRY

Students have grown up in the technological age. They are very literate in electronics, computers and media. This makes them ideal candidates to run the SM sound and media booth. It includes such tasks as mixing sound, recording, creating and executing PowerPoint presentations, producing videos, and so forth. If the SM group is fortunate enough to find a good leader to work with the students, they can usually produce optimal results in this ministry.

THE YOUTH CHOIR

The youth choir is usually made up of every age group in the SM group. Some churches may be large enough to have a Junior High Choir and a Senior High Choir, but most churches have only one group, commonly referred to as the Youth Choir. This group sings regularly at the SM worship services and occasionally in the main services of the church. They may also perform special music at Christmastime or other holidays.

THE EDITORIAL TEAM

The editorial team is comprised of students who enjoy writing and compiling the monthly newsletter. There are

some who do the writing, others who interview students, others who take pictures and some who do the layout. The editorial team usually works under a SM leader or student leader.

OFFICE AIDES

Office aides are students who volunteer to do office work for the SM. They may do a mailout or type a letter or make phone calls. They can be used to do special projects like the SM directory or even to send out e-mail notices.

CONCESSION STAND

If the youth group has a concession stand, there is usually a team of students who operate the stand. This is typically overseen by a SM leader who is in charge of purchasing the food and making sure the area is always sanitized.

STAYING CONNECTED—THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Most SM groups adopt a name for their monthly newsletter. It is usually filled with interesting articles and features students who are in the spotlight, a monthly calendar, jokes or cartoons, and advertisements about upcoming events. Most monthly newsletters are put together by a student editorial staff under the supervision of a SM leader.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTREACH

The teens of America have many issues that can be addressed by an effective SM group. Some groups have telephone hotlines where troubled teens can talk to other teens over the phone. SM groups that focus outwardly on the world can make a difference in their community.

Here are a few ideas for getting a SM group involved in outreach:

- Teen Hotlines
- Adopt a Highway Program
- Habitat for Humanity or similar group
- Volunteering at a local shelter or homeless program
- Sponsoring families at Christmas
- Offering free school supplies collected by the students
- Missions trips
- Working Summer Camps
- Big Brother/Big Sister programs
- Tutoring
- Community volunteer program
- Nursing Home Ministry
- Candy stripers at the local hospital

SPECIAL DAYS, EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

GRADUATION SUNDAY

This is a designated Sunday each year to recognize the high school and college graduates. Each graduate is usually called to the stage in the main worship service to receive a Bible. The accomplishments of the graduate are also read and celebrated. Many churches bring in a special guest speaker for Graduation Sunday.

CHRISTMAS MUSICALS

The youth choir and drama teams provide a special Christmas performance on a designated date for the church and community. This is usually a night of fun for everyone and ends with an opportunity for the unchurched to receive salvation.

WINTERFEST

This is the annual winter youth retreat. Many groups attend large youth conventions sponsored by denominations or other groups. Some Winterfest programs draw thousands of attendees and create an unforgettable experience for the students.

SUMMER CAMP

Summer camps are often sponsored by denominations but are many times provided by the local church. This weeklong event is a bonding experience for students as well as a spiritual renewal for them.

CONCERTS

A night out with a great Christian band or favorite artist always works with SM. From the ticket sales to the eating out afterward, the group is buzzing with chatter and energy. It is a night to remember.

THEME NIGHTS

Theme nights are usually done in conjunction with the regular SM worship service or activity night. Usually, the students dress up according to the theme chosen. The theme adds a little flavor and fun to an already energized atmosphere. The night is filled with games and fun and sometimes ends with a worship service.

Here are some fun ideas for theme nights:

- A night celebrating a particular decade ('50s, etc.)
- Hawaiian Night
- School Spirit Night
- Wacky Hat Night
- Super Hero Night
- March Madness (celebrating basketball teams)
- Sports Night (baseball, football, etc.)

- Hobo Night (a good night to talk about the homeless)
- Sitcom Night
- Sunday Night Live (taken from Saturday Night Live)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Movie Nights. Popcorn and a good movie is always a favorite with SM. It's simple, easy and, most of all, it's fun.

Amusement Parks. If you are fortunate enough to live near an amusement park, it can be an instant event for the SM group. All you need is a few chaperones and you're off.

COLLEGE PREPARATION

It is important that the SM group provide some guidance for graduating seniors. The best way to do this is to appoint a committee to oversee this task. The most effective way is to have a series of classes that address several college issues. You may even invite the parents to attend.

Here are some suggested subjects for the College Prep Classes:

- How to choose the right college
- Financial aid and scholarships
- Budgeting for college life
- SAT and ACT tests
- General college prerequisites
- Declaring a major

Special guests like high school counselors or college personnel can be invited to help facilitate the classes. College students in the church may also volunteer to help.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE CHECKLIST

When a student enters the SM, if they are assigned a sponsor or leader, that person should keep a record of the student's group participation. A simple card or computer template can be designed called the "Before You Leave Checklist."

This checklist is a set of goals determined by the student and the sponsor to complete before they leave the SM program. Potentially, students can stay in the SM program for up to 10 years if they start in junior high and stay involved through their college years. Even if they leave the group after college, they still have six years in the program. This checklist provides a way to track the progress of each student. The checklist is not only good for tracking progress, but can be introduced as a covenant and goal for the student. It will give them something to work toward. A college scholarship of some sort can even be offered to every student who fulfills the covenant.

Here is a sample of a "Before You Leave Checklist." This one is called the SM Covenant.

THE SM COVENANT

Student Checklist: Name _____

Date started in the SM: _____

Were you brought by a friend? Y / N _____

If so, who brought you? My friend _____

Sponsor's Name: _____

_____ 2 Winterfests
Years Attended _____ and _____

_____ 1 Missions Trip: Location _____

_____ 1 Discipleship Course
Name of Course: _____

_____ 1 Summer Camp: _____

_____ Brought at least five new friends to church.

Names:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

_____ Participated in 2 outreach events
Comments: _____

_____ Shared your faith with at least 4 people
Names: _____, _____, _____, _____

_____ Please tell us what you liked best about the SM.
Comments: _____

_____ Do you have any suggestions for us?
Comments: _____

The sponsor or designated person should go over this list with the student each year to see how close they are to completing their SM Covenant and goals.

As you can see, there is much more to Student Ministries than putting a group of young people in a room. The information offered in this handbook has all been tried and proven to establish, grow and maintain a Student Ministry that will be effective in helping students develop and continue their spiritual relationship with God, their families and each other.

WHAT IS WOMEN'S MINISTRY

The title is self-explanatory. Women's ministry is about ministering to women and training women to minister to others. Group ministry always deals with "ministering to" and "ministering through."

CHOOSING A NAME

Most youth and children's ministries choose a name that identifies the group. However, it is very common for the office of women's ministry to identify themselves as Women's Ministry or Ladies Ministry. Many women see the importance of choosing a name for the ministry. A name gives identity and focus to the group. It allows each participant to feel like she is a part of something unique and important, as opposed to simply being involved in a generic gender group.

There are many great names that have been used by women's ministry groups. Some of them have been copyrighted and can only be used by starting a chapter of the existing group. Usually the name that is chosen will in some way describe the purpose of the group.

THE MISSION AND VISION OF WOMEN'S MINISTRY

It is important that each group develop a mission or vision statement to determine the focus and direction of the group. If the group is a part of local church, the mission and vision must fit within the scope of the church's mission and vision statements. Most ladies' groups within a local church use the church's mission and vision statements for their group.

Without a written mission and vision, the women's ministry can easily fall into a traditional maintenance mode, where they exist solely for minimal tasks, like fund-raising and superficial social events. In this case, the women miss out on the wonderful opportunity to minister to each other and to their church and community.

THE WOMEN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Qualifications for the director of women's ministry include the following:

1. She must be called to this type of work.
2. She needs to have a great heart for women, as well as a broad understanding of their needs.
3. She needs to be a well-organized individual who is capable of recruiting and training a team to lead the women's ministry.
4. She primarily functions as the chairman of a committee of individuals who oversee the various ministries and activities of the women's ministry.

In many cases, the pastor's wife is automatically appointed to this position. This mind-set is long outdated. The person over this group needs to be called to this type of ministry and should possess the gifts and skills necessary to implement and execute this ministry effectively. The pastor's wife may not be the best choice unless she feels called to this position.

The selection of the leaders is usually done by appointment from the senior pastor. Some small groups choose to elect their own director, but in many cases, the person elected to the position is neither called nor qualified, so the best method is still for the right person to step forward and make the senior pastor aware of her calling and interest.

HOW TO GET ORGANIZED

The most efficient and effective way to organize a women's ministry is to appoint a board or committee to oversee various activities and ministries. Here is a suggested lineup for the board or committee:

- Director of Women's Ministry—chairperson
- Assistant to the Director (sometimes referred to as the vice president)
- Treasurer
- Director of Communications and Publications
- Director of Social Events
- Director of Conferences and Retreats
- Director of Outreach and Evangelism
- Director of Small Groups
- Director of Worship
- Director of Networking (other women's ministries outside the church)
- Director of Community and Political Affairs

TRAINING THE LEADERS

Each group should select a training program and make it a requirement for all leaders within the group. The program can be as simple as going through the handbook once a year, or as elaborate as a book or video training course on leadership development. Taking the time to train and develop the leaders will raise the level of excellence and confidence of those leading the other women. Their spirit of excellence will cause the whole group to respond in like manner, thus producing a better quality ministry.

The director may wish to write a job description for each of the board or committee members. If so, the job descriptions should state clearly the duties and responsibilities of each role. Job descriptions are a great way of ensuring that each person is performing her role to the expectations of the director. Many times, a well-written job description is the biggest difference between frustration and functionality.

THE MINISTRY CALENDAR

1. *Daily.* Daily ministries offered through Women's ministry might include such things as a prayer chain or on-call ministry of encouragement. Some groups specialize in counseling for women which is sometimes offered on a daily basis within the normal work week.

2. *Weekly.* The group members should decide what kind of events they plan to offer on a weekly basis. In most cases, this would be a Bible study, special-interest group or small-group meeting. It is important to make sure that the same people are not involved in too many events, or they will become overloaded and discouraged.

3. *Monthly.* Monthly events may include things like social gatherings, pampering parties and outreach ministry opportunities. Many women's ministries are involved in community outreaches, such as Meals on Wheels and other benevolent programs. The women's group may choose to have a social night each month that is designated

solely for having fun. They may choose to do a monthly “Mom’s Night Out,” where ladies meet, eat and shop. Some groups have a ministry for couples and offer a “Couples’ Night Out” and the Women’s Ministry provides a child-care program for those who need to spend time together. Some groups have monthly meetings that are filled with reports, a financial statement, planning and a time of socializing.

4. *Annual Events.* Annual events may include conventions, conferences and retreats.

The largest gathering of women will be at a convention. Most women’s conventions have anywhere from 500 to 50,000 women in attendance. The difference in a convention and a conference is that conventions are primarily worship services. Each day is filled with two to three worship services and various speakers. Conferences primarily are held in a classroom setting and usually have a variety of choices for the attendees. There are many great women’s conferences and conventions around the country. A few of them have as many as 5,000 to 50,000 in attendance. If that is too large, there are many other conferences offered by a number of well-known women’s groups.

Conferences usually have around 1,000 to 2,000 in attendance. Usually they are held in conference centers or large hotels. Most of them will offer a variety of speakers and topics to choose from. Retreats are the smallest of these types of gatherings. Retreats are usually sponsored by local women’s groups, but sometimes they are sponsored by larger ministries. Retreats can have anywhere from 10 women to several hundred.

Some women’s ministries choose to have one weeklong event. Here is a brief schedule for such an event:

Monday—Worship and a speaker

Tuesday—Breakout classes on various topics

Wednesday—Shopping, classes or guest speaker

Thursday—Pampering, fun and games

Friday—Closing session with a speaker

Other groups prefer women’s retreats. There are many models for a women’s retreat. There is the *small-group model*, where the women are broken into small groups and go through a variety of teachings and exercises with their group. They usually come together for corporate worship a couple of times during the retreat.

One great retreat model is the *conference model*. In the conference model, ladies are given a schedule of various classes they may choose to attend. They usually come together for corporate worship a couple of times during the retreat, but the effectiveness is primarily through the classes.

Another very successful setup for a women’s retreat is the *convention model*. Here, the women are always together in one room and a speaker addresses the whole group in every session.

Each retreat is geared to meet different types of needs in women. In the small-group model, women will experience intimacy, an examination of the inner self, openness, trust with others and personal resolution. In the conference model, women are given choices so they can choose to attend classes that speak directly to them. In the convention model, the women will experience the energy of the corporate setting. The room will be filled with corporate laughter at times and tears at other times. They leave the convention-style retreat feeling like they belong to the society of womanhood.

MONTHLY LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

Monthly meetings are necessary for any ministry group that wants to stay focused and connected. The monthly meeting should consist of a financial statement, reporting and planning. Many groups hold the meeting after having dinner together. Once the financial statement is reviewed, each person on the board should give a verbal or written report of what the group is doing. After the reports are given, the planning calendar should be reviewed

to make sure all events are well organized and clearly communicated to all of the participants in the ministry. These meetings usually last between one to three hours—according to the size of the group, the number of board members, and whether or not a meal is included in the meeting.

SMALL GROUPS FOR WOMEN

Small groups are a wonderful way to reach women who would otherwise never get involved in women's ministry. Small groups can meet almost anywhere and anytime. Most small groups meet in homes or in restaurants. A small group is defined as a group of approximately 10 women or less who meet on a regular basis.

There are a variety of great ideas for women's ministry small groups. Here are only a few:

SERVICE OR OUTREACH GROUPS

- Mentoring Groups for Young Mothers
- Sewing Ministry
- Cooking Ministry
- Carpooling Ministry
- Homework Ministry
- Nursing Home Ministry
- Reading to the Blind Ministry
- Meals on Wheels
- Nurses for Newborns
- Hospice Care Groups
- Missions

SOCIAL GROUPS

- Quilting Club
- Scrapbooking Club
- Arts and Crafts
- Bowling or Tennis Club
- Walking Club
- Soccer Moms
- Recipe Club
- Personal Care Groups

COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT GROUP PROGRAMS

- Mothers Against Drunk Drivers
- D.A.R.E. (Drug Awareness Resistance Education)

MINISTRY GROUPS

- Bible Study Groups
- Intercessory Prayer Groups
- Praise and Worship Groups

NETWORKING

There are so many wonderful Women's Ministry groups operating today. Many of them have events that are open to the public. Here is a list of a few groups to be considered for networking:

Women's Aglow (www.aglow.org)

Women's Ministry Network (www.womensministry.net)

Women's Missionary Union (www.wmu.com)

Women's Network (www.beingbeloved.org)

Ruth Women's Ministry (www.ruthministry.com)

STAYING CONNECTED

Keeping the group connected is extremely important to the success of women's ministry. In today's world of busyness—especially for women with children at home—it takes a special effort to keep the group connected and focused. A *monthly newsletter* or letter from the director is perhaps one of the easiest and most efficient ways of disseminating pertinent information. In addition to the monthly communiqué, a *ministry bulletin board* can be very helpful in keeping the group up-to-date. The board should be located in a strategic place where ladies often gather. Just outside the women's restroom or in the lobby of the church is a great place. Utilizing the weekly *church bulletin* is also effective, especially for new women in the church who are not yet involved in women's ministry. Many women today have access to the Internet, so having a *Web page* and utilizing *e-mail lists* can also help to keep the group informed. Of course the *telephone* is still a very effective way to communicate, especially when most people have the convenience of a cell phone readily available. *Phone trees* are a quick-and-easy way to relay emergency and critical information such as meeting cancellations, death notices, hospital notices or special needs.

THE MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Many people join the women's ministry for support and friendship. They may need an outlet in their life or perhaps are even seeking an inner healing. Offering the ministry of encouragement to these women can be a life-changing experience. There are many ways to offer this unique and much-needed ministry:

1. *Big Sister Program*. In this program, every new woman is assigned to a stable and mature member for a period of several months. The purpose of the program is to help women become comfortable in the ministry. The Big Sister will introduce the new member to everyone in the group, call and check on her regularly, and usually will sit with her in church during the assigned period.

2. *Secret Pals*. The Secret Pal program is very effective in encouraging others. At the beginning of the year, or at a designated time, all of the women who choose to participate in the program put their names in a hat. The names are then drawn out secretly by all the members. No one knows whose name the other people in the group have. For the next year, she will send cards and purchase small gifts for the secret pal. Usually the paper that is drawn has other types of information on it, such as birthday, hobbies, special interests, anniversaries and home address. At the end of the year, the group gathers for a party to reveal the secret pals. The night ends with expressions of appreciation and sentiments for the kindness of a person whose identity was unknown.

3. *Encouragement Committee*. An encouragement committee is a group of individuals who are assigned to send cards and make telephone calls to the group for the purpose of offering encouragement. This special group of women nurtures and cares for the women of the group in a variety of creative ways.

4. *Small Groups.* Small groups are a natural way to encourage individuals. By simply encouraging the women to participate in a small group, the women will automatically receive nurture, care and friendship from the group.

5. *Support Groups.* There are many support groups that exist solely for addressing the needs of women. There are groups for women with low self-esteem, groups for women recovering from abuse, and even post-abortion groups. The types of support groups that can be started are endless. The key is to listen for the cry of the women, find the wound and heal it. Regardless of the need, with two or three individuals who have a need and a qualified facilitator, a support group can be initiated. Support groups meet in living rooms, classrooms, parks and restaurants. They are easy to budget, easy to maintain, but most of all, they are very effective for healing lives.

SOCIAL CLUBS

There are hundreds of ideas for starting a social club with a group of ladies. Either start a chapter of an already organized group, or start your own. Social groups are a wonderful way to bring wholeness to the life of a woman. In the group, new friends are made, and a good time is had by all. Laughter does the heart good like a medicine.

Many ladies groups join the “Red Hat Society.” This is a group of ladies who get together for a time of fun in a social setting. All of the ladies show up wearing a red hat for a planned time of fun. For more information about the Red Hat Society, visit their Web site at www.redhatsociety.com.

MISSIONS PROJECTS

Many women’s groups sponsor missions work. There are numerous ways to do this. You can adopt a missionary, or sponsor a child from an orphanage home. You can initiate special fund-raising projects for designated needs on the mission field or start a ministry of encouragement to missionary families and send them cards, letters, money, personal items and gifts. Bringing missions into a women’s ministry group will help to develop their souls and spirit.

SPECIAL DAYS FOR WOMEN

1. *Mother’s Day.* Mother’s Day is a great time to focus on the women of the church. One of the things that works great is for the church to have a special theme for Mother’s Day. Some churches have an all-ladies choir to sing, or give flowers to all the women in the house. Some have special presentations from the children and youth of the church. Many women’s ministries will have a Mother/Child Banquet for mothers and invite children to attend. A great idea for Mother’s Day is to have all the women put their names in a hat and draw out several names for a prize giveaway.

2. *Ladies Day.* Ladies Day is a Sunday that is set aside when all of the ministry is done by the ladies in the church. The music, preaching and teaching are done by the ladies to celebrate women in ministry.

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Aimee Semple McPherson is a woman who pioneered the work for women in ministry. At a time when many people frowned on women in the pulpit, this wonderful woman forged ahead to make room for women. After 10 years of grueling evangelistic work, McPherson decided to settle down in Los Angeles in 1921. She purchased property near Echo Park, designed and built Angelus Temple, dedicating the new building on January 1, 1923. By the time she was 33 years old, Aimee Semple McPherson had established the first Christian radio station in the United

States, a 5,300-seat auditorium in which thousands of people were saved and healed, a Bible College, and ultimately a denomination—all of which are still in operation today.

Today, women in ministry are emerging more than ever before. Prominent conferences like “Woman, Thou Art Loosed” have given today’s Christian women wings. Some have tried to silence their voices on a male-dominated floor of business, but their gifts have already made room for them in pulpits, stadiums, on airwaves, convention centers and publications around the world.

Women like Joyce Meyer, who employs over 600 people to run her evangelistic ministry, have proven that, with God’s help, women can stand in the face of adversity and come into their rightful divine destiny.

The list of successful women in ministry is long. *Ana Ruth Diaz* pastors over 5,000 people in the city of Tegucigalpa, Honduras. *Judy Jacobs*, *Karen Wheaton*, *Paula White*, *Juanita Bynum*, *Shirley Ceasar*, *Annette Watson*, *Jackie Smith*, and *Gloria Copeland* have covered the globe with preaching and teaching. The Hall of Faith is filled with female vocalists, musicians and other types of artists whose voices have not gone unheard. Women have spoken up, showed up and held up the banner of the Cross for centuries. They have given birth to ministries, churches and movements of the faith. They are among the elite of Kingdom leaders, who many times, like Mary, pushed their way through a crowded group of men to break an alabaster box at His feet.

But Jesus said, “Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her” (Mark 14:6-9).

WHAT IS MEN'S MINISTRY?

The title is self-explanatory: Men's Ministry is about ministering to men, and teaching and training men to minister to each other. Group ministry always deals with "ministering to" and "ministering through."

CHOOSING A NAME

Most youth and children's ministries choose a name that identifies the group. It is common for the office of men's ministry to identify themselves simply as "Men's Ministry." However, more men are beginning to recognize the importance of choosing a name for their ministry. A name gives identity and focus to the group. It allows each participant to feel as though he is a part of something unique and important, as opposed to simply being involved in a generic gender group.

There are many great names that have been used by men's ministry groups. Some have been copyrighted and can only be used by starting a chapter of the existing group. Usually, the name chosen will describe the purpose of the group.

THE MISSION AND VISION OF MEN'S MINISTRY

It is important that each group develops a mission or vision statement in order to determine the focus and direction of the group. If the group is part of a local church, the mission and vision must fit within the scope of the church's mission and vision statement. Most men's groups formed within a local church use that church's mission and vision statement for the group.

Without a written mission and vision, Men's Ministry can easily fall into a traditional maintenance mode where they exist solely for minimal tasks, such as fund-raising and superficial social events. In these instances, the men miss out on the wonderful opportunity to minister to each other, as well as to their church and community.

THE MEN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

In many cases, the pastor or a staff pastor is automatically appointed to the position of director. That mindset is long outdated. The director needs to have a great heart for men and a broad understanding of their needs. He should be a well-organized individual who is capable of recruiting and training a team to lead the Men's Ministry. His primary function is to be the chairman of a committee of individuals who oversee the various ministries and activities of the men in a local church.

The selection of the director ought to be by appointment from the senior pastor. The applicant should be called to this type of ministry and must possess the gifts and skills necessary to implement and execute the office effectively. Some small groups choose to elect their own director, but in many cases the person elected is neither called nor qualified. The best method is for the right person to step forward and make the senior pastor aware of his calling and interest in the position.

HOW TO GET ORGANIZED

The most efficient and effective way to organize a men's ministry is to appoint a board or committee to oversee various activities and ministries. A list of suggested positions for a board or committee would include the following:

- Director of Men's Ministry—Chairperson
- Assistant to the Director (sometimes referred to as the Vice President)
- Treasurer
- Director of Communications and Publications
- Director of Social Events
- Director of Conferences and Retreats
- Director of Outreach and Evangelism
- Director of Small Groups
- Director of Worship
- Director of Networking (other men's ministries outside the church)
- Director of Community and Political Affairs

TRAINING THE LEADERS

Each group should select a training program and make attendance a requirement for all leaders within the group. The program can be as simple as going through the handbook once a year, or as elaborate as a book or video training course on leadership development. Training and development will raise the level of excellence in the attitude and confidence of those men leading the others. This spirit of excellence will cause the whole group to respond in like manner, thus providing a better quality ministry.

The director may wish to write a job description for each board or committee member. If so, the job descriptions should clearly state the duties and responsibilities of each role. Job descriptions are a great way to ensure that each person is fulfilling his role to the expectation of the director. Many times, a well-written job description is the biggest difference between frustration and functionality.

THE MINISTRY CALENDAR

1. *Daily.* Daily ministries offered through men's ministry might include such things as a prayer chain, or an on-call ministry of encouragement. Some groups specialize in counseling for men, which is sometimes offered on a daily basis within the normal work week.

2. *Weekly.* The group should decide what kind of events it plans to offer on a weekly basis. In most cases, this would be a Bible study, special interest group, or a small-group meeting. It is important to make sure that the same people are not involved in too many events, or they will become overloaded and discouraged.

3. *Monthly.* Monthly events might include social events and outreach opportunities. Many Men's Ministries are involved in community outreaches; for example, Meals on Wheels® and other benevolent programs. The men's group may choose to have a social night each month for the sole purpose of having fun. They may choose to do a monthly "Boys' Night Out" to meet and eat or go to a sporting event. Some groups offer a ministry to couples and include a "Couples' Night Out" designed to strengthen relationships. Some groups have monthly meetings

filled with reports, financial statements, planning, and a time of socializing. A *monthly prayer breakfast* is a great way to give men a time of social and spiritual interaction. The director either prepares a devotional program or invites a special speaker. The breakfast crew arrives early to prepare the meal and the men arrive between 6:30 and 7 a.m. The majority of the time is spent eating and talking. Following the devotion or speaker, the group ends with prayer around 8 a.m. and everyone starts their day. If the meeting is held on a Saturday, the starting time should be later so people can get a little extra rest, if the weekend is their only time off from work.

4. *Seasonal*. Seasonal events for men may include fishing or hunting trips. They may also form sports teams and participate in softball, basketball, bowling leagues, or they may attend collegiate or professional sports events.

5. *Annual*. Annual outings can include conventions, conferences, retreats or special holiday events.

CONVENTIONS, CONFERENCES AND RETREATS

The largest gathering of men is a *convention*. Most men's conventions have between 500 and 50,000 men. The difference between a convention and a conference is that conventions are primarily worship services. Each day is filled with two to three worship services and various speakers. Conferences, for the most part, are held in a classroom setting and usually have a variety of choices for each man. There are many great men's conventions and conferences around the country. A few have as many as 5,000 to 50,000 in attendance. If that is too large, there are other smaller conventions offered by a number of well-known men's groups.

Conferences commonly have 1,000 to 2,000 in attendance and are usually held at conference centers or large hotels. Most of them offer a variety of speakers and a choice of topics.

Retreats are the smallest type of gatherings. Retreats are usually arranged and attended by local men's groups, but are sometimes sponsored by larger ministries. Retreats can have anywhere from 10 men to several hundred.

Some Men's Ministries choose to have their own weeklong event. Here is a brief schedule for such an event:

Monday—Worship and a Speaker

Tuesday—Break-out Classes on Various Topics

Wednesday—Outing, Classes or Guest Speaker

Thursday—Fun and Games

Friday—Closing Session With a Speaker

RETREAT MODELS

Other groups prefer men's retreats. There are many models for a men's retreat.

1. In a small-group model, the men are divided into smaller groups and go through a variety of teachings and exercises within the group. They usually come together a couple of times for corporate worship.

2. The conference model is where men are given a schedule of various classes they may choose to attend. As in the small-group model, they usually come together a couple of times for corporate worship during the retreat, but the effectiveness of the conference model is primarily through the classes.

3. In the convention model, the men are always together in a large room and a speaker addresses the whole group in every session.

Each retreat is geared to meet different types of needs in men. In the small-group model, men will experience intimacy, openness, an examination of the inner self, trust with others, and personal resolution. In the conference

model, men are given choices and they can choose to attend classes that speak directly to their situations. In the convention model, the men will experience the energy of the corporate setting. The room will be filled with corporate laughter at times, and tears at other times. They leave the convention-style retreat feeling as though they belong to the society of manhood.

MONTHLY LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

Monthly meetings are necessary for any ministry group that wants to stay focused and connected. The monthly meeting should consist of a financial statement, a report and a planning session. Many groups hold the meeting after having dinner together. Once the financial statement is reviewed, each person on the board should give a verbal or written report of what the group is doing. After the reports are given, the planning calendar should be reviewed to make sure all plans for events are well organized and clearly communicated to all of the participants in the ministry. These meetings usually last one to three hours, depending on the size of the group, the number of board members, and whether or not a meal is included as part of the meeting.

SMALL GROUPS FOR MEN

Small groups are a wonderful way to reach men who would otherwise never get involved in Men's Ministry. Small groups can meet almost anywhere and anytime. Most small groups meet in homes or in restaurants. A small group is defined as approximately 10 men or less who meet on a regular basis.

There are a variety of great ideas for Men's Ministry small groups.

Here are a few:

SERVICE OR OUTREACH GROUPS

- Mentoring Groups for Younger Men
- Auto-Care Group
- Lawn and Garden Group
- Yard Work or Home Repair Ministry
- Nursing Home Ministry
- Reading to the Blind Ministry
- Meals on Wheels®
- Mission Trips

SOCIAL GROUPS

- Sports Club
- Bowling or Tennis Club
- Walking Club
- Coaching
- Hunting Club

COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT GROUP PROGRAMS

- D.A.R.E.
- 12-Step Recovery Group

MINISTRY GROUPS

- Bible Studies
- Intercessory Prayer Groups
- Praise and Worship Groups

NETWORKING

There are many wonderful Men's Ministry groups operating today that have events open to the public. Here are just a few to consider:

- Promise Keepers
- LifeBuilders
- Gideons

STAYING CONNECTED

Keeping the group connected is extremely important to the success of the Men's Ministry. In today's world of busyness, especially for men with families, it takes a special effort to keep the group connected and focused. A *monthly newsletter* or a letter from the director is perhaps one of the easiest and most efficient ways of disseminating pertinent information. In addition to the monthly communiqué, a *ministry bulletin board* can be very helpful in keeping the group up-to-date. The board should be located in a strategic place where men often gather, for instance outside the men's restroom or in the lobby of the church. Utilizing the weekly *church bulletin* is also extremely important, especially for new men in the church who are not yet involved in Men's Ministry.

Many men today have access to the Internet, so having a *Web site* and utilizing *e-mail lists* can also help to keep the group informed. Of course the *telephone* is still a very effective way to communicate, especially when most people have the convenience of a cell phone. *Phone trees* are a quick and easy way to relay emergency and critical information, such as meeting cancellations, death notices, hospital notices or special needs.

THE MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Many people will join the Men's Ministry for support and friendship. They may need an outlet in their life or perhaps are even looking for an inner healing. Offering a ministry of encouragement to these men can be a life-changing experience. There are many ways to offer this unique and much-needed ministry:

1. *Big Brother Program*. In the Big Brother program, every new man is assigned to a stable and mature member for a period of several months. The Big Brother will introduce him to everyone in the group, call and check on him regularly, and will sit with him during the assigned period. The purpose of the program is to help men become comfortable in the ministry.

2. *Small Groups*. Small groups are a natural way to encourage individuals. By simply encouraging the men to participate in a small group, they will automatically receive care and friendship from their group.

3. *Support Groups*. There are many support groups that exist solely for addressing the needs of men. Groups for issues such as financial planning, investing, parenting, marriage, and so forth, will attract men with these types of needs.

SOCIAL CLUBS

1. *Monday Night Football*—Many groups sponsor a weekly gathering for men who would like to get together with other men to watch football. All it takes is a large-screen TV, a few snacks, and you have a ready-made small group.

2. *Fishing Club*—Many men like to get together with other men to fish. A particular day of the month and a location is set and the men do the rest. They bring their own gear, bait, snacks and a few fish stories.

3. *Bowling Leagues*—Every local bowling alley has league nights. You only need a few interested men to have a team in a league, or you can gather enough men to have your own league. Each week, they will wear the colors of the group and let their light shine. This is evangelism and fun at its best.

4. *Sports Teams*—Softball and basketball leagues are prominent in most every community. This kind of group provides fun, fellowship and teamwork.

There are hundreds of ideas for starting a social club with a group of men. Either start a chapter of an already organized group or simply start your own. Social groups are a wonderful way to bring wholeness to men's lives. In the group, men make new friends and have fun. Scripture tells us that laughter does the heart good like a medicine.

MISSIONS PROJECTS

Many men's groups support missions work. There are numerous ways to do this. You can adopt a missionary or sponsor a child from an orphanage home. You can initiate special fund-raising projects for designated needs on the mission field, or start a ministry of encouragement to missionary families and send cards, letters, money, personal items and gifts. Bringing missions into a Men's Ministry group will help to develop their souls and spirits.

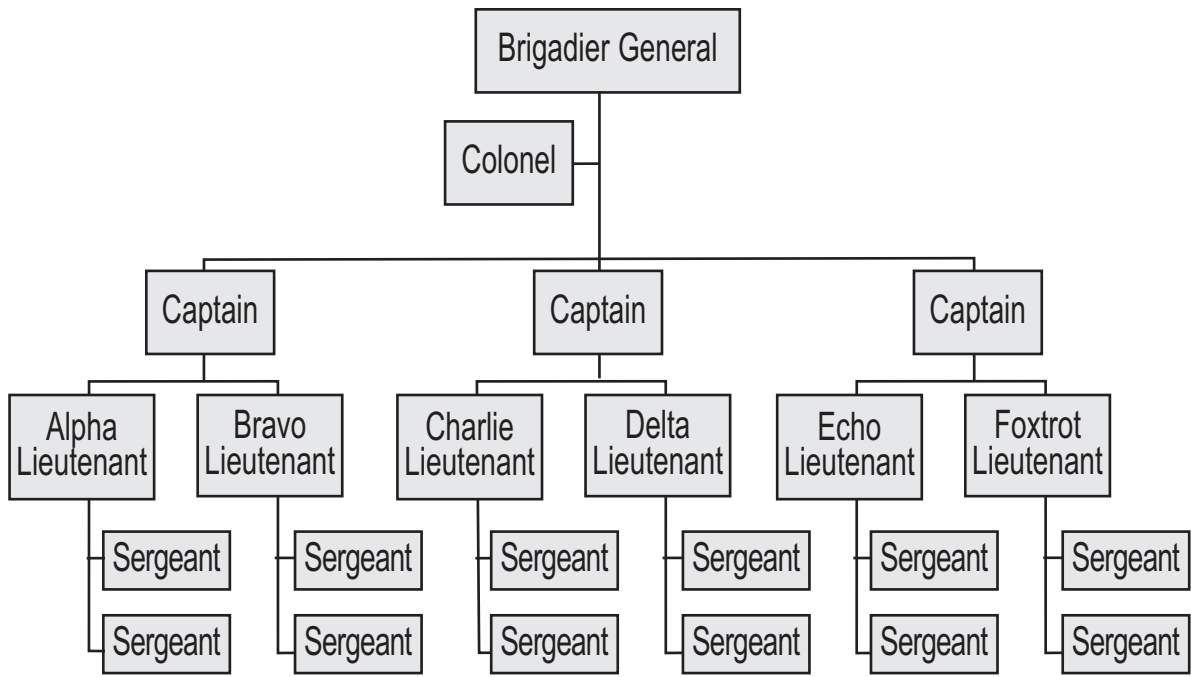
SPECIAL DAYS FOR MEN

1. *Father's Day* is a great time to focus on the men of the church. One thing that works well is for the church to have a special theme for Father's Day. Some churches have an all men's choir to sing, or give a small gift to all the men in the house. Some have special presentations from the children and youth of the church. A great idea for Father's Day is to have all the men put their name in a hat and draw out several names for a prize or meal certificate give-away.

2. *Men's Day* is a Sunday set aside when all of the music, preaching and teaching is done by the men of the church to celebrate men in ministry.

BONUS MATERIAL:

THE ARMY OF THE LORD MEN'S RETREAT ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN



I. Leadership

A. Brigadier General (1)

B. Colonel (1)

C. Captains (3)

D. Lieutenants (6)

1. Alpha Company
2. Bravo Company
3. Charlie Company
4. Delta Company
5. Echo Company
6. Foxtrot Company

E. Sergeants—Each company will have at least two (2) Sergeants.

F. Soldiers—all of the men who sign up to go on the retreat

II. Job Descriptions

- A. Brigadier General—head of command
 - 1. Coordinates the spiritual exercises for the retreat
 - 2. Meets with leadership to make sure that everything is running smoothly
- B. Colonel—second in command
 - 1. Reports directly to the General
 - 2. Helps organize the retreat, sets up the schedule, and makes sure the captains, lieutenants and sergeants are performing their duties as defined
- C. Captain—third in command
 - 1. Reports directly to the Colonel
 - 2. Duties include supervision over the Lieutenants who serve in their battalion.
 - 3. Each has a specified duty to administer before the retreat (i.e. registration, advertising or finances).
 - 4. He is also in charge of delegating duties to the Lieutenants in his battalion.
- D. Lieutenant—reports directly to the Captain
 - 1. His duties include supervising the Sergeants in his company.
 - 2. He is required to recruit and train Sergeants who will serve under his command.
 - 3. Prior to the retreat, he will be required to provide men to be in charge of the registration table.
 - 4. He will also be instrumental in creating opportunities for the men in his company to gather after the retreat is over.
- E. Sergeant—reports directly to the Lieutenant
 - 1. He is responsible for the well-being of his company, which consists of the Sergeant and nine other men.
 - 2. His duties include making sure his company is at the appropriate place for each event, and that each man in his company understands the schedule.
 - 3. In addition, he will be instrumental in providing a fun and memorable experience for each man in his company.
 - 4. The Sergeant will also be called upon to participate in other ministry opportunities as they present themselves.

III. Making It All Happen

- A. Host a planning session with the leadership team. This team will consist of the Brigadier General, Colonel and the Captains.
 - 1. Reason for meeting
 - a. Develop a strategy
 - b. Retreat schedule
 - (1) First-day activities
 - (2) Carpool availability—leave church at a specified time

2. Duties and obligations for each Captain
 3. Duties and Responsibilities for Lieutenants
- B. Develop a structure—assign company Lieutenants.
1. Alpha Company
 2. Bravo Company
 3. Charlie Company
 4. Delta Company
 5. Echo Company
 6. Foxtrot Company
- C. Company Assignments
1. Captain
 - a. Alpha Company
 - b. Bravo Company
 2. Captain
 - a. Charlie Company
 - b. Delta Company
 3. Captain
 - a. Echo Company
 - b. Foxtrot Company
- D. Preretreat responsibilities to be carried out by the Lieutenants
1. Advertising
 2. Set up PowerPoint slide to run each service
 3. Develop teams to promote to outside churches
 4. Create an advertisement to run in weekly bulletin
 5. Any other form of all-church advertisement
 6. Create an invitation letter to send to the men
- E. Lieutenants' meeting
1. Training to discuss responsibilities
 2. Organization
 3. Have Lieutenants pick Sergeants
- F. Registration and finances
1. Set up registration table
 2. Use two Lieutenants each service
 3. Dress up in camo clothes when they work at the table
 4. Use any other type of promotional materials to promote the event

- G. Secure the retreat or conference center.
- H. Finalize the retreat exercises.
- I. Promote, advertise, and conduct registration.

WHAT IS SMALL GROUP MINISTRY?

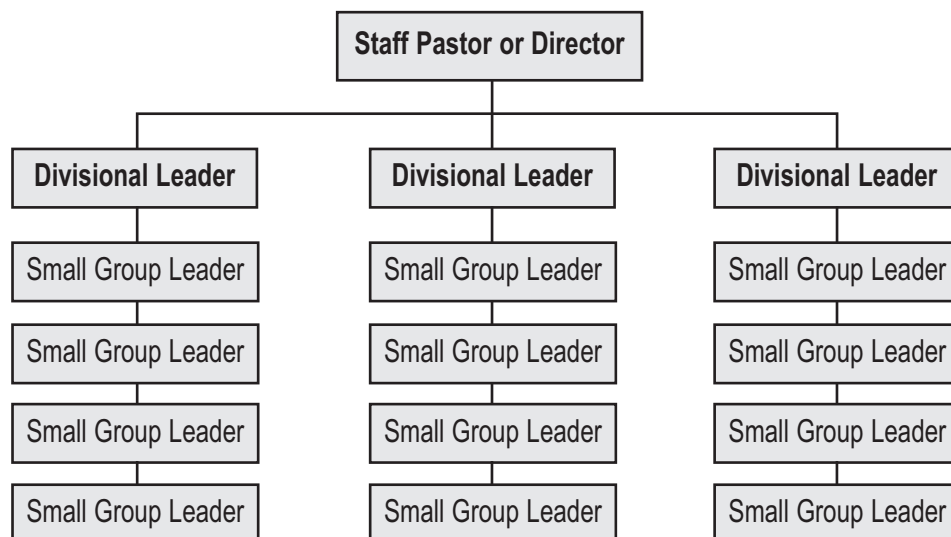
Small group ministry is not a new concept. Small groups have existed since the beginning of organized civilization. A small group is technically defined as a group of 5 to 12 individuals engaged in the same purpose, such as a committee, Bible Study group, fellowship group, service group, special interest or ministry group.

While an age-old concept, small groups are one of the primary organizational strategies of the postmodern church. The largest churches in the world use the small group forum for assimilating and developing their people. Within the last decade, several books, seminars and conferences have been developed to train church leaders in small group ministry. These groups can help a local church to become much more effective in ministering to the busy people of the 21st century.

Many pastors and church leaders fail to recognize they already have small groups operating in their churches. Elders, deacons, usher teams, pastor’s council, Sunday school boards, visitation committees, nursing home ministry, children’s church workers, youth boards and countless other committees or team groups are already functioning as small groups.

There are a million ways to win a million souls, and small group ministry can literally take on a million different looks. With the right structure and proper training, small group ministries can propel your church into a pattern of growth that will help your church assimilate and develop the people within your congregation and community.

HOW IS A SMALL GROUP MINISTRY ORGANIZED?



STAFF PASTOR OR SMALL GROUP DIRECTOR

If a church is large enough to hire a Small Group Ministries Pastor, he or she will serve as the director of all the groups. If the church is unable to hire a staff pastor for this position, a Small Group Ministry director should be appointed.

The director's responsibilities are as follows:

- To recruit and train all small group leaders
- To oversee and monitor the success of each small group
- To oversee the selection of curriculum used in small groups that require curriculum
- To assist in advertising for small groups
- To keep all schedules and advertising materials up-to-date
- To keep other staff members informed about small groups
- To assist small group leaders, as needs arise
- To continue to develop new small groups
- To work with the Small Group Committee to assist each small group or division of groups in their development

THE SMALL GROUP COMMITTEE AND DIVISIONAL LEADERS

The Small Group Ministry Committee should consist of no less than three individuals. Each one should be in charge of a particular division of the department. Small groups are usually organized in divisions of similar interest. We will discuss the various types of small groups later in this manual. Each division is given a division leader who serves on the Small Group Committee.

Division leaders are responsible for representing their division and giving a report at each monthly meeting. They should have a regularly scheduled meeting with all the group leaders in their division prior to the monthly meeting. At the monthly meeting, they can submit the needs of a particular group or entire division to the Small Group Ministry director. If the Small Group Ministry Department is not large enough for a committee, the small group leaders will report directly to the director.

THE SMALL GROUP LEADER

The Small Group Leader leads the individual small group and is in charge of recruiting the group members, maintaining the group and scheduling group events. In addition, the leader is usually in charge of creating an atmosphere conducive to the function and needs of the group. This involves keeping records of attendance and group events to report to the division leader or staff pastor. It is very important that every Small Group Leader understands the mission and vision of the local church.

One of the dynamics of the small group atmosphere is closeness and familiarity. While this is the true strength of the small group, it can also become the weakness. In many ways, this group operates like a family. Because the group meeting becomes a place of trust and familiarity, conversations are usually very honest. Any member of the group who begins to think outside the vision of the church could easily sway the group to begin to see the church in a negative light. However, if the leader of the group is grounded and committed to the mission and vision of the church, he or she is usually able to easily bring the group back into focus.

THE LEADERSHIP MEETING

Each Small Group Leader is required to attend a monthly or bimonthly leadership meeting to give an update on the group. Attendance is mandatory to retain the position of Small Group Leader. The meeting is chaired by the staff pastor or Small Group Ministry director and is the time for vision-casting, problem-solving and motivation. The leaders get together and glean from the experiences and successes of each member in the group. Anyone who is unable to attend should notify the chairman of the meeting. Consistent absenteeism is unacceptable and an indication that the leader may need to be replaced.

The agenda for this meeting is simple:

- I. Prayer
- II. Review the Vision and Mission of the Church
- III. Small Group Leaders Reports
- IV. Policy and Procedure Issues
- V. Motivation or Training
- VI. Dismissal

Most small group leaders will be asked to fill out a written report on their group. These reports are due at the meeting. The report form is very simple and includes the following:

1. Name of Leader
2. Name of Group
3. A place to write a report on the various activities
4. A place at the bottom to list how the leader is doing personally

A scale can be used from 1 to 10; 1 = poor and 10 = great. The leader is asked to circle the number that best describes how he or she currently feels. If a leader circles a low number, the director can follow up from the report to check on the leader and offer the proper support.

GROWTH BY THE DIVISION OF CELLS

Small Group Ministry is a part of the growth dynamics of the megachurch growth in the world. While many megachurches draw vast crowds by their sheer size and ability to host events, the church families are usually held together by strong departments within the church and a host of small groups. These small groups not only provide effective ways to assimilate newcomers, but they also provide a vehicle for growth.

Since a small group is defined as a group of 5 to 12 individuals, groups that grow larger than 12 are encouraged to branch off and start new small groups. When a group grows beyond 12, it begins to lose the dynamics of intimacy and fellowship that make the group feel personal. The ownership of the group changes as the numbers increase. Therefore, groups are encouraged to divide into new cells or groups by taking two couples from the group to start a new group. This process produces growth within the church.

A small group atmosphere is a perfect place to bring an unsaved friend. It is small, intimate, nonthreatening, personal, non-“churchy” and friendly. Most churches that grow by conversion growth do so primarily through small groups. Small groups should be encouraged to leave room for at least one unchurched couple or two unchurched singles.

One small group evangelism principle is the *empty-chair* principle. Each group is encouraged to set up two empty chairs each time it meets. Before the members leave, they pray together that unchurched people will occupy those chairs. This serves as a motivator for individuals to share their faith. The principle works and is very powerful in building the faith of the whole group.

THE PURPOSE OF SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

The small group ministry model helps fulfill several needs in the church. First, it allows the pastor to put the ministry of the church into the hands of the laity. This effective plan, known as lay ministry, gives ownership and

energy to the local church. The pattern set forth in Ephesians 4 lays out a plan for a very effective New Testament church model. When the apostle Paul instructs the church about the fivefold ministry, he explains that these ministers are there to “equip the saints for the work of the ministry.”

As the equipper, each local pastor should seek to build a church filled with lay ministries. Since most layman work a job and are not paid, small groups are an ideal way to keep them involved without overloading them.

Secondly, small group ministry allows people to get connected to your church. Small groups are one of the quickest ways to assimilate newcomers into the church. In order to do this, Small Group Ministry has to have a high visibility and must be well represented in the welcome and assimilation systems.

Small groups will assist in connecting new people in a ministry area that best suits their interest, calling and giftedness. When you connect individuals to a ministry they feel passionate about, you connect them to your church. Relationships will form, and friendships will develop.

If your church doesn't have a small group formed in a particular area of interest, create one. One of the beauties of small group ministry is that the group *is* small and can be started with little effort in many cases. One of the appealing dynamics of small groups is they are always changing and adapting. This ministry has the ability to become whatever you want it to be. With the right structure and organized leadership, you can lead the troops of small groups easily and effectively through the network of small group leaders.

Thirdly, the small group ministry model will help fulfill your evangelistic outreach efforts. When groups are formed, they are commissioned to actively invite new people to take part in their activities. These people are friends and families who do not attend church on a regular basis and would normally not attend a regular worship service. While the unchurched are not always eager to go to a worship service, many will go willingly to a night of fun and fellowship.

SMALL GROUPS OFFER FLEXIBILITY AND GIVE THE CHURCH ELASTICITY

This ministry offers a very flexible way to be involved in ministry. First of all, group leaders can arrange meetings around their schedules. They can choose the days, times, and how frequently they want to get together and where they want to meet. This is critical in a busy society where people are always “on the go.” It allows the freedom to do ministry that does not require you to hold meetings at the church. Homes, restaurants, coffeehouses, parks, beaches, conference rooms and break rooms are all great places to hold a small group meeting.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR A SMALL GROUP MINISTRY LEADER

- Must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- A regular attender in good standing with the church
- A regular financial contributor of tithes
- Must complete the training course for small group leaders
- Must adhere to the guidelines of the small group ministry department and leadership
- Must interview with the staff pastor or Small Group Ministry director
- Must complete any prerequisite course required by the local church for its leaders and workers

RECRUIT AND TRAIN

Advertisement for a new group should begin at least six weeks prior to the first meeting. Usually, there are many means for effective advertising that already exist in the local church. Be sure to include ads in the church bulletin,

newsletters, bulletin boards, PowerPoint ads, brochures, and so forth. However, the most effective form of advertisement will be word of mouth. A personal invitation will bring more individuals into the group than anything else.

The training session for new leaders should be completed prior to advertising. When an interested person contacts the new leader, that leader should be well informed and able to give precise answers to the curious candidate. The course used to train the small group leaders is designed or chosen by the staff pastor or Small Group director. There are many excellent courses available on the Internet or at the local Christian bookstore. Though each leader is required to take the initial training course, it should be understood that training is an ongoing process. Leaders may be asked to take other training classes throughout the course of their service.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

It is imperative that confidentiality is protected in order for a group to develop in trust and honesty. Members should feel the things they discuss inside the protective covering of their group will stay protected in the hearts of their friends. Anyone in the group who breaches that trust should be confronted (care-fronted) privately by the leader. If the violation of trust continues, the individual should be dismissed from the group. When a new group is formed, it is important that every person in the group is made aware of the need for confidentiality.

TEAM BUILDING

Several methods and exercises can be used to help bring the diverse members of your leadership team together. Each person on the team must feel he or she is a significant part of the unit. Their diversity is the strength of the group. It allows the collective to experience many facets of the small group experience. No one person can do all the work in a ministry. By asking the members to do group tasks, they will learn interdependence.

There are numerous enjoyable team-building exercises that can create positive and memorable experiences for the group. Here are a few examples:

1. Use Lego® building blocks to create a house.
2. Create a scrapbook for one of the groups.
3. Do yard work together for a needy or elderly person.
4. Take a trip together.
5. Make a PowerPoint commercial to use in advertising.

In addition to exercises, celebrating the successes of each group, whether small or large, will also build momentum within the department. Ask group leaders to bring pictures with their reports. You can even have a photo album or bulletin board for all small groups.

THE SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES DEPARTMENTAL CALENDAR

WEEKLY—Weekly small group meetings

MONTHLY—Leadership meeting

QUARTERLY

- Special training class
- Dinner with small group leaders

ANNUALLY

- Annual Ministry Fair
- Book read and discussion
- Training Seminar
- Holiday party

TYPES OF SMALL GROUPS

Small groups can take on many different forms and functions. The key to an effective group is finding 5 to 12 people who are interested in the same thing. We will discuss various types of small groups, but keep in mind the list is endless, and new ideas for small groups are emerging daily. This is an incredible way to build relationships in the local church. From the basement to the beach, small groups can form and thrive.

SUPPORT AND RECOVERY GROUPS

This group is for individuals trying to recover from some type of addiction, abuse or pain, or individuals who are in need of support while dealing with it. It is very important that the leader of a support or recovery group is highly qualified to lead the group and has accountability to a certified counselor or professional.

Ideas for recovery groups:

- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Divorce Recovery
- Post-Abortion Recovery
- Spouse Abuse
- Child Abuse
- 12-Step
- Children of Aging Parents
- Parents of Gays and Lesbians
- Financial Recovery

SERVICE GROUPS

This group is made up of individuals wanting to offer a service to the church or community. The leader of this group is usually trained in a particular type of skill.

Ideas for Service Groups:

- Auto Repair
- Lawn Service
- Garden Club
- Helping Hands for the Handicap
- Meals on Wheels Volunteers
- Cooking Club (for the elderly or sick)

- Photography Club
- Child Care
- Financial Planning

MINISTRY GROUPS

This group is made up of individuals interested in ministering to a particular target group. The leader of this group should be recognized by the church as qualified to lead in ministry.

Ideas for Ministry Groups:

- Deaf Ministry
- Special Needs Ministry
- Ministry to the Handicapped
- Singles Ministry
- Music Ministry
- Deliverance Ministry
- Intercessory Prayer Group

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

This is usually a teaching class of some type. The class may be an ongoing discussion of a special interest topic or a group that meets to have a Bible study. The person leading this group should be recognized by the church as a qualified teacher.

Ideas for Discipleship Groups:

- Jewish Roots Class
- New Converts
- Business Men's Group
- Business Women's Group
- Bible Study Group
- Youth Bible Study Group
- Couples' Bible Study Group
- Church History Research and Discussion Group
- Theological Preservation Group
- Morning Prayer Breakfast

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

This group is made up of individuals who have similar interests and want to have fun together. It is usually led by someone who likes to be with people and have a good time.

Ideas for Fellowship Groups:

- Bowling Club
- Sports Team (Softball, Tennis, Basketball, Volleyball, etc.)
- Scrapbooking
- Exercise Group
- Golf Group

- Game Group (Cards, Scrabble, Dominoes, etc.)
- Antique Collectors
- Yard Sale Buddies
- Groups that enjoy “The Arts”

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

If the Small Groups Department can publish a monthly newsletter, it will help to keep all the small groups and leaders connected. The newsletter can be distributed when the groups convene. It can advertise new groups forming, as well as celebrate other existing groups. The newsletter can be filled with pictures, good articles, jokes, puzzles and announcements.

SPECIAL EVENTS TO PROMOTE SMALL GROUPS

The Small Group Department may also want to sponsor churchwide events that will enhance their groups. For instance, if they promote a marriage conference or marriage weekend, they will fill their weekend with new potential small group leaders and workers. At the event, announce that the weekend was sponsored by the Small Group Ministry Department. Explain the small group philosophy and provide attendees an opportunity to get involved. A simple card or questionnaire is all it takes to increase the recruiting pool. After the event, follow up on all the potential candidates. The same thing can be done with a golf tournament, Valentine’s banquet, Christmas party, musical concert or any event sponsored by the Small Groups department.

Like the many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that fit together to make a beautiful picture, small groups are a necessary part of fitting people together to create a healthy, productive church.

WHAT IS SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY?

Senior adult ministry is often viewed as a social activity for senior adults—and that is part of it, but it’s not all of it. We need a new vision of senior adult ministry—a vastly expanded panoramic vision that encompasses the comprehensive needs of seniors in body, mind and spirit. The creation and execution of spiritual development activities, opportunities and exercises are designed to enrich the connection of the senior adult to God.

We have one purpose in mind, which is the spiritual development, so that the activity is blessed. A senior adult is a unique person, a unique child of God, and whatever age we may be, God has a purpose for our lives.

Senior adult ministry is the least developed of all age group ministries. Christian publishers have all sorts of material for adult development, but very little is targeted for those in the winter of their lives. Most senior adult curriculum is modified from what we use for other adults. Somehow churches have this notion that when people reach a certain age, they are on their own. Their faith development is accomplished, and there’s nothing left to learn.

How is it that we think spiritual growth only happens at younger ages? When thinking of ministry to senior citizens, most people focus primarily on physical ways to help. Checking on the welfare of an older generation is admirable and appreciated, but there are many senior citizens who have active, healthy lifestyles and brilliant minds. True, they have much to offer in the way of mentoring the younger generations; however, they still face the same spiritual struggles and have hearts that yearn after God and want to know Him more.

SENIOR ADULT LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Professional training is an assumption when most churches hire staff. Effective pastors, associates, youth directors, music ministers, and so on, are all expected to have some education in their field. What about senior adult leaders? What specific training have these people in the larger churches across America had in preparation for their present role?

Figure 1

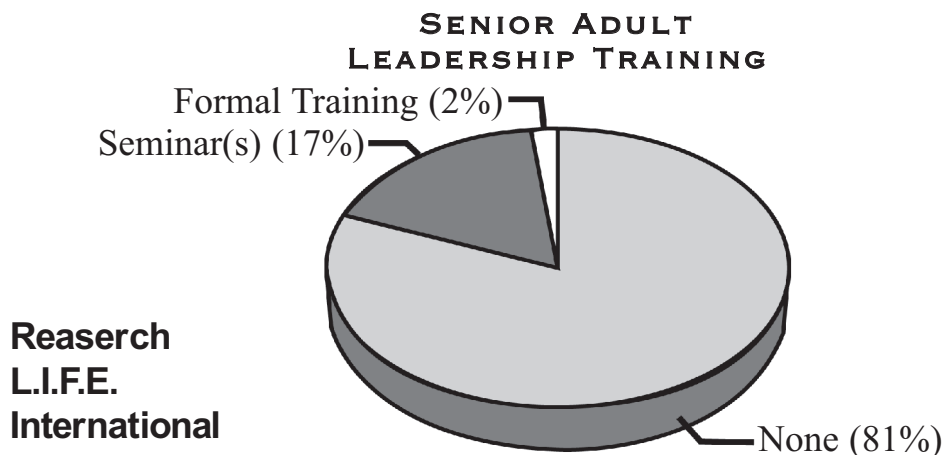


Figure 1 shows that 81 percent of senior adult leaders have not had any kind of training. Seventeen percent have attended a seminar. Only 2 percent have had any type of formal training. Why is this? The most obvious reason is that there is little or no training available. Of the 2 percent who had training, a sizeable number listed their training for the present leadership roles as “40 years in the ministry.” In other words, many are retired pastors. While there are exceptions, the general observation is that when retired pastors are serving as senior adult pastors, they often assume a “caretaking” role rather than pursue an aggressive growth and outreach priority.

A second observation about retired pastors functioning as senior adult ministers is that the education and experience pastors accumulate over their 40 years of ministry is not necessarily appropriate or adequate training to lead a growing senior adult activity, particularly in the 21st century. The operative word here is *growing*.

Implications for more effective ministry are as follows:

1. Any church, regardless of size, that desires a significant ministry and evangelistic outreach to persons over 50 years of age needs a director of senior adult ministry.
2. Senior adult leaders are more effective when they have specific training. Seminars and publications are becoming more available. Senior-adult study centers are being established.
3. Build funds into your church budget for continuing education of senior adult leaders (staff and laity).

ADDED VALUE TO THE CHURCH AND SENIORS

What is the value of investing time in this type of ministry? There is an overwhelming satisfaction of fulfilling a call. This should be extremely significant to a pastor who has a sincere burden for the community. Nothing can satisfy a person more than to know he or she is in the will of God. People like to feel useful. When the church is viewed as a lighthouse for senior adults, God will bless it with an increase in members, offerings, and so on. A talented labor force becomes available to accomplish needed tasks for the church.

God will also reward the church with financial blessings. People give to an organization that meets the needs of its constituents. Donations of land and services are a by-product. Wills and trusts executed at death often specify gifts to the church. A larger church membership means increased tithing. Acquiring money is not the motive of the church, but according to Luke 6:38, God amply rewards those who give of themselves to others. The church is no exception.

God will bless the senior adults with contentment. To shut-ins, a simple birthday card, phone call or visit is a treasure. For someone to read the Bible or play an audiotape of a service is priceless. Having new friends visit is immeasurable. How do you place a value on the encouraging phone call, the inspired heart or the beautiful smile on someone’s face?

One of the most treasured values is the blessing God will exert upon the church spiritually. Scripture tells us, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Dr. Elmer Towns describes this change in the title of his book for converts, *A Fresh Start in Life*. This will be one of the most gratifying experiences for the church—giving a new outlook to complacent seniors. And senior adults will be eternally grateful to the people who helped them receive a fresh start in their lives.

All successful ministries must be based on Biblical principles. Pastors are given spiritual gifts: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11, 12). The senior adult ministry will have many functions, but the primary function should be to teach the Word of God, disciple the flock, and provide opportunities for spiritual growth to the participants.

TYPES OF SENIORS

Senior adults fall into one of four categories:

1. *Active*. Most fall into this category. These are people who are still employed or recently retired, or those who have maintained an active lifestyle and will continue to do so as long as they are physically able.
2. *Impaired*. Some fall into this category. The impairment may be minor, where mobility is somewhat restricted, or major, where mobility is very difficult or impossible without assistance.
3. *Shut-in*. These folks are dependent on others to maintain their lifestyle. They need to be visited, but they also need to be needed and given the opportunity to serve from their home. They can pray, call on the prayer chain and do other work from their home.
4. *Confined*. These folks are in nursing homes and require constant care. They need to be ministered to by people in the active and/or impaired group.

The purpose of the senior adult ministry is to meet the needs of all groups. It is important to see that no one is overlooked and that all have been given an opportunity to serve and to participate in a meaningful service, giving consideration to their abilities and limitations.

STARTING A SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY

Why do some senior adult ministries grow, while others flounder? In order for the ministry to grow, you have to be able to attract a variety of people from within the church, as well as from outside the church. To do that, your purpose must be Christ-centered and attainable. The goal must be to reach out to all senior adults (saved and unsaved) to bring them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. You must be willing to disciple any nonbelievers whom you may attract. Any senior adult group that is satisfied with attracting only those senior adults in the local body is sure to fail. You may have some growth spurts, but without a real purpose, a goal and a vision, stagnation or decline is certain.

In the early stages of development, establish a purpose for your group. This should be given high priority, for without a purpose and a vision, the group will deteriorate into a self-focused group of individuals with varying purposes. Visitors may not become members, but members may well become visitors. Since the purpose statement of any senior adult ministry is the foundation upon which its activities should be built, it should adhere to the following guidelines:

- *Unify the members of the group*. The members must feel that they are a part of the group. One way to do this is to get everyone involved in the planned activities and ministries of the group.
- *Provide motivation for involvement and a basis for accountability*. The old saying is true, “As the leader, so goes the flock.” The leaders have to be enthusiastic and show excitement about what they are doing. They are the motivator to make everyone want to take part in the activities.
- *Give assurance that the group is doing God’s work rather than just keeping busy*. Keep the group aware of the ministries they are involved in as a group. The social part of the group is wonderful and fun, but if your group is not ministering to individuals, it’s not a ministry. Make sure the group is aware of the ministry opportunities and get them involved when possible.

- *Provide overall direction.* The group must be made to feel a part of the group, but the leader must lead.
- *Define what the group will and will not do.* Appoint committees for different functions and activities within the group and allow them to do their job. Give guidance only when needed.
- *Establish a basis for measuring accomplishments of the group.* It's important to keep members informed of the finances and accomplishments and what's happening in each ministry.

The purpose statement for any Christian organization should include the following points:

- Biblical discernment—what you believe God is calling you to be or to do
- Prospective audience—identifying those individuals and groups who will be the focus of your ministry
- Major activities—ways through which the gospel will be communicated
- Geographic area—where you have been or are being called to minister
- Anticipated outcome—what you anticipate, with the help of the Lord

The most important aspect of any purpose statement is to use it! Here is a suggested statement of purpose:

The senior adult group has as its purpose to serve, not to be served. We believe God is calling us to take His love in concrete ways to the unchurched senior adults in our community, as well as to extend the love of God and the love of the family of God to those within the church. These goals will be accomplished through regularly planned activities and emphases, with the anticipated result of God's blessing and people coming to Christ and the church. By-products of these activities will be spiritual growth, communion, participation, and social and recreational development.

Progressive, growing churches have a common quality: they believe that the best is yet to come. The same can be seen in senior adult ministries. In the communities surrounding every church are groups of senior adults in need of the good news—people who are empty because they do not know Jesus. The opportunity and potential to reach these senior adults is amazing.

There will be obstacles, as there are in any worthwhile endeavor. But there is no reason the senior adult activity will not grow if you put into practice your purpose, your goals and your vision. God wants all His lost children to be saved; therefore, His power can transform possibilities into reality. We have settled for too little for too long; we must put aside our personal preoccupations and get busy building the kingdom of God.

Once you decide to start a senior adult ministry, conduct survey of the older adults in your church and the community to determine their needs. A good questionnaire is designed to determine the needs of the seniors and to collect information about their abilities, health, and so on. It provides demographic data, ministry and service involvement, what each senior would like to do, and who the potential leaders may be. It also covers potential programs, arts, crafts and hobbies, as well as social activities, sports, trips, excursions, tours and talents. A section may be included for personal comments or suggestions. Start with church members who are 50 or older; then try to attract parents of some of the younger members who do not attend your church. Next, do an interest survey in the church neighborhood.

Ownership is an important ingredient in senior adult ministries. Leaders should not dictate the agenda; they should only be facilitators. Allow seniors to participate in the decision-making, planning, and scheduling of events. A basic axiom of planning is that people tend to participate in an activity to the degree they have helped develop it. Hence, they have ownership. Solicit a planning committee for the initial development of any activity. Select people who have a positive attitude and who are willing to invest time and energy to develop a successful senior adult ministry.

ORGANIZATION: LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE FOR AN EFFECTIVE SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY

BURDEN

The senior adult ministry should be directed by individuals or a couple who carry a sincere burden for older people. The right director will like being in the company of senior citizens, sharing ideas, stories, conversation, experiences, planning and organizing activities with them.

LOVE

The most important quality is a genuine love and concern for senior adults. With love you cannot fail, and without it you cannot succeed. In addition to this prevailing compassion, a director of senior adults must enjoy being with elderly people. He or she might take the older adults to lunch, help pack and move them into retirement apartments, run errands for them, and take them to the doctor, drugstore and shopping when needed. Those who have no family look to the director for guidance and help. What's the reward, besides God's blessings? These people will love you with everything that's in them.

SHARE

A third requirement is a willingness to share leadership responsibility. While a director might be officially appointed to head a group of seniors, it must be *their* activity. The director might help facilitate and coordinate activities, but the senior adults will respond positively only if they have ownership of the agenda.

LEARN

Another quality for leadership of senior adults is a willingness to learn. Formal training in gerontology is good, but informal education is also valuable. A good director will read widely in the field and subscribe to magazines and newsletters for seniors.

VISION

In any worthy venture, a successful leader will have a vision of what can and should be accomplished. This vision, with God's help and a measure of faith and hard work, will accomplish miracles. We can apply Scripture to senior adult ministry, as with any other ministry: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).

AGE

What age should a director of senior adults be? As actress Billie Burke once said, "Age doesn't matter unless you are cheese." Many seniors can qualify as directors and enhance their quality of retirement life, but some youth pastors or Christian education directors could be used in dual ministry to both youth and seniors. Whereas the younger staff member may be a natural for this function, some retirees perceive this leadership opportunity as a way to enhance their own life and ministry. Although age is important, love is the critical ingredient.

LEADERSHIP

What is a good leader? I believe a good leader can be defined this way: When a good leader looks back, he or she will see people following him or her. The senior adult director must function as both a minister and a teacher. To only minister limits the size and scope of the work. But only God knows the limits when the older adults are motivated and trained to minister to their own age group and others.

STRUCTURE

Concerning structure, it seems advisable to have representation of the group to serve on the Deacon Board or to be part of the elder's ministry of the church. This helps to provide balance to in-church decisions and priorities. The senior adult ministry should be in the mainstream of the church's life and flow, as should all ministries of the church.

VISIBILITY

Share the vision with the pastor. Keep channels of communication open. Pastors who understand and identify with the group will want to further this ministry. The pastor may ask for a senior choir or for testimonies on "Senior Sunday," when older adults are recognized for their achievements and are challenged toward even higher Christian commitment. Senior Sunday is always in September of each year.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The senior adult director should be accountable to the pastor and the Deacon Board and should report directly to the director of church ministries or administrative pastor, whichever position exists in the church structure.

COMMITTEES

Solicit participation in and develop committees for entertainment, decoration, planning, transportation, visitation, and so on. Some members may serve on several committees, especially in smaller churches. Again, if the members are given an opportunity to participate, they will take ownership.

FINANCES

If at all possible, the activity should be self-supporting. Receive offerings at monthly meetings and have fundraisers to help with the financial support of those who are in need (e.g., activity expense, flowers).

GETTING STARTED

Group size will be in correlation to the size of the church. Our local senior adult ministry has grown from 16 at the first meeting to over 500 members as our church has grown. The more members of the group, the more assistants we have added.

God has wonderfully blessed our senior adult ministry (Young at Heart) because ministry has been the number one goal. We meet on the first Friday of every month for an activity. Most of our senior adults, if physically able, attend church. Some of them are very lonely and need a time of fun and laughter with Christian friends. We always try to do something different and exciting, instead of the standard potluck dinner. We try to have activities where members can laugh and have a good time of fellowship. Our meetings start with a short devotion from an elder or minister. At our Valentine or Christmas banquets, we have a speaker with a spiritual message. Ministry to your senior adults must always be the ultimate goal.

MINISTRIES WITHIN THE SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY

The following is a list of current ministries within our local group. We started small and added ministries to accommodate the needs as we grew.

Activity Cost—We pay the cost of some activities to keep them affordable for all.

Assimilation—We send a follow-up letter to senior guests of the church and then call them.

Benevolence—We donate funds to individuals and benevolent ministries during the holidays and for other needs.

Cards—We send birthday and get-well cards to our members.

Church on the Go—We provide a portable DVD player (if needed) and DVDs of the morning service for those who are homebound.

Drama—We are in the process of establishing a senior drama team.

Encourager—We send notes and call members to encourage them.

Financial Assistance—We help those who can't afford to participate in activities.

Flowers—We send flowers for members who have gone on to be with the Lord.

Helping Hands—We provide meals for a short time for those who have had surgery.

James Gang—We provide minor home/auto repairs for seniors and others in need.

Newsletter—We publish a monthly newsletter.

Orphanage—We sponsor five cottages at the Smoky Mountain Children's Home.

Prayer Chain—We have a prayer chain that goes into action upon receipt of a prayer request.

Prayer and Godly Encouragement (PAGE)—We provide pagers for those who have had major surgery or illness. When someone prays for them, they dial the number of the pager and it vibrates on the patient, letting them know that someone is praying for them.

Senior Singles—We have a quarterly activity for our senior singles.

Third Age Learning Center—We provide various learning classes for our members, including computer, and so on.

Veterans—We do volunteer work at the VA hospital.

Visitation—We visit hospitals, homebound seniors and those confined to nursing homes.

Web site—We have our own Web site with a link on the church site.

Widow's Assistance—We adhere to the Scriptures by giving assistance to widows.

Millions of children are currently being raised by single or divorced parents, guardians, parents of different religions or races, gay or lesbian parents, and adoptive parents. What do American families look like today?

SINGLE PARENTS

- Single parents account for 27 percent of family households with children under 18.¹
- More than 2 million fathers are the primary caregivers of children under 18, a 62 percent increase since 1990.²
- One in two children will live in a single-parent family at some point in childhood.³
- One in three children is born to unmarried parents.³
- Between 1978 and 1996, the number of babies born to unmarried women per year quadrupled from 500,000 to more than 2 million.⁴
- The number of single mothers increased from 3 million to 10 million between 1970 and 2000.¹

DIVORCED PARENTS

- Nearly half of all marriages end in divorce.¹
- More than 1 million children have parents who separate or divorce each year.⁵
- More than half of Americans today have been, are, or will be in one or more stepfamily situations.⁶

GUARDIANS/FOSTER CARE

- One child out of 25 lives with neither parent.³
- An estimated 550,000 children were in foster care as of March 31, 1999, a 35 percent increase since 1990. About 120,000 of these children were waiting for permanent adoptive families.³
- The number of children in foster care who are being cared for by members of their extended family—grandparents, aunts, uncles—continues to increase. In 1993 (the last year national statistics are available), kinship providers cared for about a third of the foster children in New York, 40 percent of foster children in California, and nearly half of foster children in Illinois.⁷
- In 1999, adoptions were finalized for more than 17,000 foster children. Another 18,000 children were living in foster homes waiting for adoptions to be completed, and about 20,000 foster children were legally available for adoption but had not yet been placed in their new homes.⁷

¹ U.S. Census Bureau of Household and Family Statistics, 2000

² *New York Times*, May 20, 2001, Jane Fritsch

³ *State of America's Children Yearbook 2000*, Children's Defense Fund

⁴ National Survey of America's Families

⁵ The National Commission on Children

⁶ Stepfamily Association of America

⁷ CRS Report for Congress: Foster Care and Adoption Statistics

- The 2000 U.S. Census found that 2.4 million grandparents are the primary caregivers for the children in their families.¹

ADOPTION

- According to national estimates, 1 million children in the United States live with adoptive parents, and from 2 percent to 4 percent of American families include an adopted child.⁹
- More than 100,000 children are adopted each year.⁹
- From 1992 to 1999, the number of children adopted from abroad more than doubled, from 6,720 to 16,396.¹⁰
- In 1996, more than 5.2 million children lived with one biological parent and either a stepparent or adoptive parent, up from 4.5 million in 1991.⁸

MIXED-RACE FAMILIES

- Interracial families are an ever-growing part of our national landscape. The 2000 Census showed that 2.8 million children under age 18 and nearly 7 million Americans of all ages identify as more than one race.¹
- There are more than 4.5 million married and unmarried couples in the United States who are mixed racially or ethnically.¹

GAY AND LESBIAN-HEADED/UNMARRIED PARTNER HOUSEHOLDS

- Between 6 million and 10 million children of lesbian, gay and bisexual parents currently live in the United States.¹¹
- The number of unmarried partner households has increased by 72 percent in the last decade, from 3 million in 1990 to more than 5 million in 2000. These figures include both same-sex and different-sex couples.¹
- One-third of lesbian households and one-fifth of gay male households have children.¹
- The Census Bureau reports that New York has 46,490 same-sex households, Ohio has 18,937 same-sex households, and Missouri has 9,428 same-sex households.¹³
- During the past decade, the number of same-sex households grew significantly in 10 states for which figures have been released: more than 700 percent in Delaware and Nevada; more than 400 percent in Vermont, Indiana, Louisiana and Nebraska; and more than 200 percent in Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts and Montana.¹⁴

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau Press Release

⁹ National Adoption Information Clearinghouse

¹⁰ U.S. State Department

¹¹ American Bar Association, 1987, Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE)

¹² Council on Contemporary Families

¹³ Human Rights Campaign Press Release

¹⁴ *The Washington Post*, June 20, 2001, D'Vera Cohn

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Deacon's Manual

Elder's Manual

Hospitality Manual

Music Ministries Manual

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Staff Hiring Manual

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Christian Education Board Handbook

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Dr. Bryan Cutshall,

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