

COOL TOOLS FOR SABBATH SCHOOL

Ministering to the Sight-impaired

As a layperson you are also called to minister to the sight-impaired in your Sabbath School and in your community. Therefore, when you are face to face with blind or otherwise sight-impaired persons who visit, remember the following points:

A warm welcome

√ Introduce yourself. Identify who you are and what your role is in the Sabbath School. It may take several introductions for the person who is blind to recognize you by voice.

√ When shaking hands, make verbal references, such as: "I am pleased to meet you" or "Let me shake your hand." Introduce anyone who is with you and give the visitor any pertinent information about that person. "On my right is Mary Taylor. She is a Sabbath School teacher."

√ When directing a blind person to a seat, place his or her hand on the back or arm of the chair or pew. The person will know what to do from there.

Class time

Just as we enjoy reading and meditating on God's words, so do our sight-impaired friends. You can share with them the love of Christ and His soon coming.

√ When conversing in a group, call out the name of the person to whom you are speaking, an auditory clue.

√ It's all right to use the words "look" and "see."

√ If you describe something to a sight-impaired person, try to paint a vivid word picture.

√ The person may not be able to look directly at you, but he or she can still listen and engage in a conversation. Use a normal speaking tone; many sight-impaired persons hear exceptionally well.

Fellowship

Sight-impaired people like to participate in church activities.

√ Save possible embarrassment by introducing your friend to those in the room. If others come in later, also be sure to introduce them.

√ Speak to the person the same way you would speak to your sighted friends.

√ If you have to leave, let the person know you are leaving so he or she will not be left speaking to "empty air."

√ If you haven't spoken with the person for a while, don't ask him or her to guess your name; tell him or her who you are.

√ If you encounter a sight-impaired person who seems to need help, offer your services by saying, "May I help you?" If the person needs your assistance to walk down the aisle, allow him or her to take your arm. Don't grab the person's arm. While walking, it is important that the person control his or her own movements.

√ When giving directions, be specific. Saying "Over there" doesn't help someone who cannot see where you are pointing. Be specific: "Walk down the hall straight ahead 20 feet. Then go up two steps."

√ When seated for a meal, help the sight-impaired person to locate food on the plate. Use the clock system: "Potatoes are at 12:00; bread and butter are at 9:00."

Resources

Christian Record Services, Inc. (CRS), an institution owned and operated by the General Conference, provides free materials:

√ Sabbath School lessons on flexible discs and cassette tapes.

√ Other free inspirational Christian materials.

√ Pastoral Care Seminar, an

outline for a special handicap awareness program. Contact Christian Record Services, 4444 South 52nd Street, Lincoln, Nebraska; 402-488-0981 (telephone) or 402-488-7582 (fax).

√ Large-print quarterlies are available through the Adventist Book Center, 1-800-765-6955.

*Hymnal released for the blind**

A Seventh-day Adventist publishing company for the blind has released a special edition of the Adventist hymnal. Ray McAllister, a first-year Ph.D. student at Andrews University Theological Seminary, who himself is blind, developed the edition for Christian Record Services using his laptop computer.

McAllister uses text on a floppy disk compatible with his laptop made especially for the blind. Users listen to the words of songs line by line using earphones connected to their computer.

"I'm now able to follow along in church during song service and I haven't always been able to do that," says McAllister. "Now blind people can sing hymns that are more obscure, that aren't in the top 20."

Ray says he can find any hymn on this program in seven seconds, competitive with people who have sight. For more information go to <http://www.christianrecord.org>.

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