

COOL TOOLS FOR SABBATH SCHOOL

The Extension Division

Every normal Christian desires to associate with fellow Christians in organized religious experiences. Yet because of circumstances, many who love Sabbath School are deprived of regular attendance. Thus the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department has adopted a plan whereby some of the blessings of Sabbath School can come to these. The plan is known as the “extension division.” This division keeps them from becoming completely isolated from the worship, study, and service of the main body of believers. It includes traveling workers, on-duty workers, and national service personnel.

All these classes of persons have something in common. They are all kept from the blessings of a fully-organized Sabbath School much of the time. This may be because of age, infirmity, illness, impassable roads, or other handicaps. It may also be because of legitimate and unavoidable duties, as in the case of conference workers who must travel from place to place, and of medical workers who must be on duty at the Sabbath School hour. Youth who are called into the service of their country and are in training camps or on field duty where regular attendance at Sabbath School is not possible should be included.

All who are thus prevented from enjoying regular attendance at a fully-organized Sabbath School are eligible for membership in the extension division. Upon their desire to do so, they may be enrolled and are then counted as members of the Sabbath School, the same as members of any other division.

There are many thousands in Sabbath School extension divisions throughout the world. Many more should be enrolled in this division, either of their local Sabbath School or of the conference or mission Sabbath School. It meets the needs of each individual, for it binds him or her not only to the Word, but also to other members who are more favorably situated in the matter of companionship. Above all, in every instance the presence of God maybe enjoyed as His Word is studied.

The Extension Division in the Local Church

An extension division should be organized in every local Sabbath School, even if there is only one person to be cared for in this way. Where there are not more than two or three in the extension division, the Sabbath School secretary, or an assistant, may care for them. Quarterly supplies are sent, or

preferably delivered personally, to the members by the secretary or the assistant secretary. Occasionally this officer will meet with the extension division member in his or her home, or arrange for someone else to do so. But if the number who join the extension division exceed three, it is best to elect an extension division leader, who will make these members a matter of personal responsibility. This leader may then give much time and attention to building up their interest and participation in systematic Bible study and mission stewardship.

Duties of the Extension Division Leader

In any Sabbath School the extension division leader should be elected in the same way and at the same time as all other Sabbath School officers. The person who accepts this office should manifest an active interest in building up the Sabbath School and in ministering to the needs of those who, because of circumstances, cannot join others in the fellowship of the regular Sabbath School. He should be a sympathetic, tactful person who will exert a wholesome Christian influence at every visit. By correspondence, telephone, and visitation, the leader can keep members of the division in touch with the activities of others in the division. This serves a purpose similar to the contacts made in class week by week.

The extension division leader should explain to each member the use of the envelope and cards provided for keeping records, the manner of planning and conducting the program, how to go about inviting others to join, and how to involve others in the profit and pleasure of Bible study. Duties of the extension division leader also include sending out the following supplies each quarter: Bible study



guides for each member of the division; a copy of the world mission report for each person or family, an extension division envelope with supplemental cards for additional members as necessary; and any other material or information that may come to the main Sabbath School that would be of interest or benefit to the extension division members. Throughout the quarter essential additional materials or information is conveyed to extension division members. A special card is used for those in national service.

In addition to these services to extension division members, there are many personal attentions that would be appreciated by the isolated or handicapped. A card sent from the Sabbath School on the occasion of a birthday or anniversary, a phone call occasionally to keep the individual informed of church news, running errands occasionally—these are the extra mile services that keep extension division members connected.

The Search for Members of the Extension Division

Another duty and privilege of the extension division leader is to monitor the church membership record to determine who from among them is attending the Sabbath School. If the school keeps a membership checkup file, the task will be easy. Extension division leaders should concern themselves principally with those who are church members but not Sabbath School members. If no record system has been maintained, the extension division leader should get a list of church members from the church clerk and try to contact all who are not enrolled in the Sabbath School, and where appropriate invite them to become members of the extension division.

If extension division members exceed ten to fifteen, there should be one or more assistants to aid the leader in caring for their Sabbath School needs. Those individuals who, with help and encouragement, could come regularly to the main Sabbath School should be urged to do so. If necessary, after visits by the extension division leader or assistant, such persons should be referred to the pastor and to the Sabbath School superintendent for further contacts.

Where one or more assistants are required to care for the extension division, it is in the best interest of the division to have regular meetings of the leaders to plan their work and to check results. Each assistant should report two or three times per quarter to the leader, who, in turn, makes regular reports of division activity and results to the Sabbath School Council. Thus this division can be kept in intimate touch with the rest of the school.

Two excellent times for regular meetings of the extension division leader and assistants are two weeks

before the end of the quarter, when supplies for the following quarter can be assigned and plans laid to visit each member of the division, and about two weeks after the beginning of the following quarter, when reports of contacts and needs of individuals may be discussed.

Another way in which the extension division leader can profitably foster this work is to arrange for Sabbath School members, either adult or young people, to meet occasionally with extension division members. Care should be exercised in choosing such visitors. Occasionally a group of good singers might go to share inspiring music.

Often extension division members are located in a community in which a Branch Sabbath School may be organized. The extension division leader should foster and encourage such projects. In the report to the Sabbath School Council, the leader may suggest possibilities for Branch Sabbath Schools and solicit cooperation in planning and organizing for them. Many such small branch schools have served to bring in new church members, and in some cases churches have been organized from these small beginnings.

The Conference Extension Division

Many church members are isolated in towns, villages, and countryside throughout the conference or mission. These usually hold membership in the conference or mission church. Without the privilege of companionship with fellow believers, they must plan their own devotional program during the week and also their hours of worship and study on Sabbath. Every isolated believer or family should be invited to join the great Sabbath School family by enrolling in the extension division. The conference or mission Sabbath School secretary should get in touch with these individuals or family groups, either by personal visit, by telephone, or by correspondence. Personal contacts are preferred, but if this is not feasible, a well-written, faith-inspiring letter will serve. Bits of human interest news from around the field, encouraging items of Sabbath School progress around the world, and interesting experiences in the extension division schools already organized among isolated church members will stimulate prospective members.

Near the close of each quarter, but at least two weeks before, the conference or mission Sabbath School director should send the new supplies to each member of the conference or mission extension division. Immediately after the close of the quarter, each extension division member should be encouraged to send to the conference or mission Sabbath School director his or her record envelopes,

together with any supplementary membership cards and missions and expense offerings given during the quarter. If the conference or mission Sabbath School director has been faithful in making personal and written contacts, the response will be far more satisfactory.

An attractive supply kit has been prepared for use by the extension division member. All necessary supplies are conveniently kept together in the kit, which also serves as a helpful reminder of the blessings derived from faithfulness in Sabbath School participation. The kits are obtained from the conference or mission Sabbath School director in the same way other supplies are ordered.

Organization and Program for Family Groups

Where a family conducts its own Sabbath School, a simple program should be followed. At least two officers and a teacher will be required, although because of circumstances one person may be compelled to be both superintendent and teacher. The two officers basically required are a superintendent and a secretary. If there are several adults and a number of children, two teachers will be necessary; one for adults, and one for the children.

A simple program for the Sabbath School extension division that includes a whole family would be:

Opening Song	4 min.
Prayer	2 min.
Secretary's Report	3 min.
World Mission Report	12 min.
Mission Offering	3 min.
Records	2 min.
Lesson Study	30 min.
Closing Song	3 min.
Dismissal Prayer	1 min.

If the conference isolated group attains to a membership of from ten to fifteen, it may be organized in counsel with the conference or mission Sabbath School director into a regular Sabbath School. If the majority of its members are non-Adventists, it may become a conference Branch Sabbath School and would report as such. Otherwise, all members of the small family Sabbath School group should report as extension division members.

The extension division member is expected to hold Sabbath School at some regular hour, carry out the simple program outlined on the back of the extension division envelope, and send this envelope filled out with the record (using a supplementary card if there are more than one in the school) to the Sabbath School extension division leader at the end of the quarter.

The extension division should never be made an

excuse for absence from a regular Sabbath School. If one is able to attend he should meet with his brethren and sisters for fellowship in study and service.

The financial goal of the extension division member is the same as for every other Sabbath School member: "As God hath prospered him or her." The amount we give will be measured by what God has bestowed on us, not by the small sum we have left after we have spent most of His gifts on ourselves. Extension division members should be encouraged to give expense offerings as well as mission offerings. Such faithful encouragement in support of the work of God at home and abroad has substantially increased mission funds and has often resulted in the covering the cost of supplies.

Reporting to the Extension Division Leader

The extension division member should be instructed to report to the leader of the extension division within one week following the close of the quarter, the earlier the better. Be sure to instruct the member in how to complete the record on the envelope, and on the supplementary card if it is used.

The name, address, quarter, and its closing date can be filled in on the envelope and supplementary card by the extension division leader before they are sent to the member. The member should fill in the name and address at the bottom of the envelope. Total contributions should be summarized by the member and written in ink. The supplementary card should have the full name of each member listed, and his or her record should be marked each Sabbath.

The extension division membership and offerings are not included in the secretary's report of the parent school each week, as is the case with other divisions of the Sabbath School. Since extension division members are often isolated, it is impossible for their records to be thus included. Instead, the extension division members keep the envelopes and record cards and then turn them in either personally or by mail to the extension division leader immediately after the close of the quarter. The leader in turn summarizes the record of the entire extension division and passes this summary to the Sabbath School secretary.

The membership of the extension division is reported as it stands on the last Sabbath of each quarter and should be reported to the secretary of the parent Sabbath School, together with the various offerings given during the quarter (twelve Sabbaths, thirteenth Sabbath, birthday-thank offerings, Investment fund, and expense offerings). These figures are added to the main Sabbath School's report at the end of the quarter.

A Suggested Letter

Following is a suggested letter to church members who are not members of the Sabbath School. It should not be used as it stands, but adapted to your local area. Then follow up the letter with a call. Go out of your way to reach each church member who should be enlisted in Sabbath School.

Dear Brother (or Sister):

During the past few weeks we have had most interesting Sabbath School programs. Our missions exercises have been especially helpful in making us acquainted with the progress of the cause of God in (the geographical place of focus for the current Thirteenth Sabbath 'Special Projects Offering).

We have also had some outstanding lessons. It seems as though the lessons we are studying quarter by quarter grow better constantly.

Brother and Sister Clark, who live four miles out on Route 3, were present last Sabbath for the first time in two months. You will remember that they have been members of the extension division for three or four years, as they have no regular means of coming in on Sabbath. We were all glad to have them with us, and how they did enjoy being in their parent Sabbath School.

We have noticed that for some weeks you and the members of your family have been absent. We are wondering if because of illness or other unavoidable cause you cannot come regularly, you would like to join the extension division of the Sabbath School. Of course you know that you can come to the parent Sabbath School whenever possible, even when you are a member of the extension division. All that you would have to do is to hold Sabbath School at home on the other Sabbaths, mark your own records for all the quarter, and pass this record in to the extension division leader just after the close of the quarter.

The extension division welcomes you and will supply you quarter by quarter with the world mission report and the appropriate Bible study guides. An envelope is supplied for your mission and expense offerings. The Sabbath School is eager to serve you and to help you enjoy its blessings. We shall be happy to enroll you in the extension division. Please let us know soon of your interest.

The entire school joins in wishing you much of God's blessing.

Sincerely your brother (or sister) in Christ,
(Extension division leader)

How to Enjoy Extension Division Membership

- Either see the leader of the Sabbath School extension division personally and register as a member of the extension division or write a brief note asking for such registration.

- If you alone are to be a member of your extension division, follow a simple program such as appears on the back of the extension division envelope, and have a set time, preferably the time nearest to that on which the Sabbath School in the church is held. Be prompt in starting, carry through with every part of the program, and if you are not musical, at least read the hymns. If you have a record or cassette player, you may use these.

- If you are so situated that you can invite others in to share the blessings of the Sabbath School with you, be sure to do so. There is a wonderful blessing in bringing the knowledge of the Word of God to other hearts.

- Make your Sabbath School as real to yourself as possible. In other words, carry into your extension Sabbath School the same systematic planning, the same diligence in carrying through the program, that you like to see in the Sabbath School in the church.

- Study the instruction on the back of the envelope and mark your records every week without fail. This is a part of the program. Do not trust to your memory afterward.

- If for some reason supplies fail to arrive on time, call or send a note to the extension division leader of your school and ask for them.

- Be sure that you do your part each quarter to keep up the living connection with your parent school. That includes the sending in of a note telling of your joy in the Sabbath School, the envelope with your record and offering, and if you have had others meeting with you, word as to their interest. You will be surprised at the help that telling about your school will give you in your own Christian experience.

- Do not expect the extension division leader to do all the work. He or she enjoys sending words of cheer and keeping you supplied with all the necessary helps, but in return be sure to let him or her know what you are doing and your appreciation of the contacts.

- Remember to pray each week for your parent school, for the work in behalf of those for whom you give in the weekly offering, for your neighbors and friends, and for all who are serving with you in the work of all the Sabbath School. Each one needs to be remembered, and the more so as the day of God approaches.

- Be faithful in the daily study of the Sabbath School lesson.

●For the children's class be sure to obtain the children's Bible study guides and the periodicals: *Insight, Guide, Primary Treasure, Our Little Friend*, according to age of the group.

●If in doubt as to the procedure you should follow in any phase of Sabbath School work, write to your extension division leader.

LEAD Magazine

The extension division members will be greatly benefited by subscribing to *LEAD Magazine* because they are often without the help and inspiration available to those attending the regular Sabbath School, where the superintendents and teachers pass

on to them the material they have gleaned from this valuable resource. Encourage extension division pupils to subscribe to *LEAD*.

“As a means of intellectual training, the opportunities of the Sabbath are invaluable. Let the Sabbath school lesson be learned, not by a hasty glance at the lesson scripture on Sabbath morning, but by careful study for the next week on Sabbath afternoon, with daily review or illustration during the week. Thus the lesson will become fixed in the memory, a treasure never to be wholly lost.”*

* *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 43.

