Alive in Jesus
SABBATH SCHOOL CURRICULUM
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

DEUTERONOMY 6:5-7
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Rationale

The Alive in Jesus Sabbath School curriculum is a Bible curriculum that seeks to nurture the spiritual life of our children and youth from the time they are babies until they are 18 years of age. We are given the advice to “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Such training is no small task. The Alive in Jesus Bible curriculum seeks to equip and empower parents, caregivers, Sabbath School teachers, Sabbath School leaders, and others to model and foster a thriving relationship with Jesus and the children in their spheres of influence.

As Ellen White shares:

“Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Savior. By prayer, by the study of His Word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go”

( THE MINISTRY OF HEALING [MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIF.: PACIFIC PRESS PUB. ASSN., 1905], P. 182).

Jesus reaches out His hand to children and adults everywhere, and says, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). The goal of the Alive in Jesus Sabbath School curriculum is to make disciples who make disciples—to encourage young people around the globe to hold on to Jesus’ hand that will never let them go, to know truth as revealed in His Word and grow daily in their relationship with Him, to stand tall and worship the Creator alone in these last days, and to go and share this with others to make a difference for eternity.

By incorporating what is known about the stages of faith development and twenty-first-century learning, best educational practice meets Bible narrative and truth, in order to grow faith and impart a clear Seventh-day Adventist worldview through the teaching and learning in this seamless 18-year scope.
Just as the Bible becomes central to our lives when we abide in Jesus, so God’s Word also forms the heart of the Alive in Jesus curriculum. It is both the bedrock and the vehicle for achieving desired outcomes. In order to be alive in Christ, Jesus invites us to abide in His Word (see John 8:31; 15:7). When we choose Him, we trust Him, seek Him, and keep His Word as the central guiding principle of our lives (see 1 John 2:5). This Word is living, powerful, and sweet to our souls (see Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23; Psalm 119:103). Through its pages we commune with Jesus, who lovingly draws us into a saving relationship with Himself (see Jeremiah 31:3). As Ellen White shares:

“The Word of God is to be the foundation of all study, and the words of revelation, carefully studied, appeal to and strengthen the intellect as well as the heart.”

The Alive in Jesus curriculum introduces children and youth to Jesus by bringing the wonderful stories and lessons of the Bible (including a clear Seventh-day Adventist worldview and the 28 fundamental beliefs) into our twenty-first-century lives. This curriculum shows young people that the truths of the Bible are unchanging and trustworthy, equipping them to study the Bible meaningfully for themselves.

in order to ultimately share the timeless truths of the Bible with others. A key goal of the Alive in Jesus curriculum is to nurture a biblical worldview in the minds of our young people so that they can see that the Bible is a lamp to their feet and a light to their path (see Psalm 119:105), and that it can be trusted to give solid guidance to all aspects of their lives.

As Ellen White aptly states:

“There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God’s Word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times.”

This foundation permeates the entire curriculum, with age-appropriate strategies and Bible study embedded in the student lessons. In Kindergarten, parents are encouraged to open their Bibles as part of the daily reading to show their children how to do so. In Primary, parents help children look up answers in their own Bibles in response to questions that are asked. And in Junior, the young people are taught the first principles of independent daily Bible study, which continues to deepen through Teen and Youth. Each level teaches the important life skill of meaningful Bible study.

The central purpose of using the Bible in such an intentional way in the Alive in Jesus curriculum is to draw children and young people into a growing relationship with Jesus, the Giver of the Word, that will last forever.

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Pillars

1. GRACE

We are first made alive in Jesus by the gift and power of His grace, which flows from His heart of mercy and love (see Ephesians 2:4, 5). When we live in an abiding relationship with Jesus, we receive this grace and accept His love for us (see John 15:9). Such gracious love for the most unworthy of sinners has power to captivate the heart and create new spiritual life in the soul.

The Alive in Jesus Sabbath School curriculum shows children and young people that Jesus loves them personally and that He offers grace and salvation to every person. This incredible gift is free, unmerited, and hard to comprehend. Yet when we accept it, it changes us and compels us to respond to God in love and obedience.

“God takes men as they are. . . . They are not chosen because they are perfect, but notwithstanding their imperfections, that through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image.”

Every level of the Alive in Jesus curriculum points our young people to Jesus, who gives the gift of grace freely to all who come to Him.

2. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

When we live in an abiding relationship with Jesus and experience His grace, we allow Him to “prune” us when we need it (John 15:2), to bring about fruit (see verse 4) for His glory.

The Alive in Jesus Sabbath School curriculum seeks to show all children that they are valued, loved, and accepted, while also showcasing the “fruit,” or Christlike character, that grows and develops in our hearts as we abide in Him.

“Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now. Never was any previous generation called to meet issues so momentous; never before were young men and young women confronted by perils so great as confront them today.”

Ellen White consistently emphasized the vital importance of character development:

The Alive in Jesus curriculum seeks to embrace, challenge, and strengthen children and youth in their personal walk with Him. It teaches Bible truth in a redemptive way, without assuming that all have chosen Jesus; while at the same time, not avoiding difficult questions.
“In our character building we must build on Christ. He is the sure foundation—a foundation which can never be moved.”

These statements beautifully describe the basis for focusing on Christlike character development in the Alive in Jesus curriculum. The fruit that results from a living connection with the Savior leads to transformation in our lives, homes, and communities.

In the student lessons, the character development focus can, at a glance, be seen in the Big Idea (Beginner through Primary) and in the opening headline (Junior through Youth). This is the central focus of the weekly reading and emerges through the Bible narrative. At the lower levels the Word of the Week streamlines a key character focus (on either God or humankind) throughout the narrative, and parents and children are challenged to use and apply this new word each week in their daily lives.

The character focus is extended through the daily enhancement features in all levels of the curriculum, through the family discussion questions, intergenerational faith talk, and the object lessons or multiple intelligence activities that drive home memorable takeaways for the child or young person.

3. MISSION

When we are alive in Christ, we long for others to experience the same joy of salvation that we have received (see John 15:11; Psalm 51:12, 13).

The Alive in Jesus Sabbath School curriculum seeks to foster a trusting, joy-filled, lifelong walk with Jesus that cannot be contained! It seeks to make our children active “influencers” for Jesus, who passionately share the great news of the gospel and the Seventh-day Adventist end-time message with the world they live in. Ellen White reminds us, “It is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found.” It’s also in witnessing that our faith is strengthened, in response to sharing the gospel with the world.

This emphasis takes a different form at each level, but every lesson incorporates an active mission focus, such as helping in the home, serving others, sharing one’s faith, retelling a Bible story, or giving a Bible study to a friend or group of people. Ultimately, this curriculum seeks to train our young people to be active agents in the mission of the church.

PILLARS RECAP

The Bible is the foundation and the method by which the goals of the curriculum are pursued. These three goals, grace, character development, and mission, are the foundational pillars of the Alive in Jesus curriculum, and feature in every student lesson and teacher’s guide.

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6 Ellen G. White, Education, p. 309.
When we are alive in Christ, we long for others to experience the same joy of salvation that we have received.
The Alive in Jesus Sabbath School curriculum aims to incorporate the “freshest thought, [the] best methods, and [the] most earnest effort” in its development, using best educational practice in the teaching of a biblical worldview. Each lesson is measured by the following writing objectives to ensure that this vision becomes a reality:

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<tr>
<th>Writing Objectives</th>
<th>1. APPEAL</th>
<th>2. CLARITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Write and design lessons that uplift Christ in a way that attracts, invites, and engages.</td>
<td>Present stories and teachings of the Bible in a clear and accurate manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Use warm descriptions and inviting language.</td>
<td>2.1 Present a true picture of God’s just and merciful character as revealed in Christ, in His goodness and glory.</td>
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<td>1.2 Communicate the infinite love of Christ for every child, revealing that Jesus is their Friend.</td>
<td>2.2 Use clear, easy-to-understand, age-appropriate language that resonates with children.</td>
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<td>1.3 Express a kind and loving approach to all, while not avoiding difficult issues.</td>
<td>2.3 Avoid using clichés unless accompanied by a simple explanation.</td>
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<td>1.4 Provide parents with thoughtful encouragement, practical help, and instruction. (Babies-Primary)</td>
<td>2.4 Stay true to the biblical message, including key Adventist teachings (28 fundamental beliefs), while writing in a colorful and appealing style.</td>
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<td>1.5 Be sensitive to cultural diversity in lesson content and artwork.</td>
<td>2.5 Draw themes and lessons from the Bible rather than imposing a theme onto the text.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.6 Use the NKJV (sometimes ICB for Beginner through Primary), maintaining true dialogue in Bible stories.</td>
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<td>2.7 Incorporate at least one Bible reading and one Bible quote into every daily lesson.</td>
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1 Ib. p. 186.
### 3. DISCOVERY

*Challenge thinking, promote deep learning, and encourage reflection.*

- **3.1** Invite children to respond thoughtfully to higher-order discussion and to reflection questions.
- **3.2** Create opportunities for children to internalize the story by sharing it in their own words.
- **3.3** Offer diversity of response activities as well as extension facts, differentiation, and multiple intelligence options.
- **3.4** Establish a strong connection between the Bible story, the memory verse, and the teacher’s program focus (including tips for teachers).
- **3.5** Incorporate nature learning through object lessons and encouragement for children to be outside in nature.

### 4. CONVICTIOIN

*Speak to the heart, and foster a saving relationship with Jesus.*

- **4.1** Be aware of the importance of how the biblical message is delivered and the process needed for spiritual life and growth.
- **4.2** Include key takeaways that show how the biblical message relates to the reader.
- **4.3** Offer developmentally-appropriate messages and opportunities for personal reflection.
- **4.4** Intentionally invite a heart response to what is explored.
- **4.6** Encourage the use of the first person singular in responses (“I” rather than “we”).

### 5. ACTION

*Encourage a response to God’s call to grow, share, and do His will.*

- **5.1** Encourage personal ownership of ongoing commitment to God.
- **5.2** Show how loving obedience to God brings peace, joy, and blessing.
- **5.3** Relate God’s invitation through age-appropriate appeals to action.
- **5.4** Promote active, age-appropriate involvement in witnessing and service.
- **5.5** Encourage an awareness of the needs of others in the home and community.

- **4.6** Offer prayer suggestions that connect to the daily reading and seek to build one’s relationship with God.
Scope and Sequence

In the construction of the scope and sequence for each level, an understanding of the stages of faith, and developmental and cognitive development, has been incorporated. Narrative is a strong focus of the curriculum, particularly in the younger levels, while clear teaching and instruction is also used to share doctrine and beliefs, particularly in the older levels.

A thematic approach is used for Babies (birth-12 months) with just four stories, one per quarter. The Sabbath School program will be made available to parents for home use so that the simple repetition of songs, with short messages woven throughout, can be reinforced daily.

A thematic approach is used for Beginner (1-3 years old) to explore simple messages. One story portion will be shared each week in Beginner, as part of one larger theme for the quarter. Activity ideas that enhance the message of the Bible story are shared for parents to do throughout the day, and a spiritual message for parents is also included.

A central focus for Kindergarten (3-5 years old) and Primary (6-9 years old) is to share the narrative stories of the Bible in memorable and meaningful ways, with a focus on family engagement and worship, as part of the learning process. A daily narrative portion is shared, along with family discussion questions, activities, prayer ideas, and mission challenges.

Kindergarten and Primary lessons follow a hybrid of the chronological and thematic approaches, with a scope and sequence that follows parallel stories so that parents with children in these age groups can use the same stories for family worship, if desired. Quarters 1 and 2 follow themes and stories from the Old Testament, while Quarters 3 and 4 share New Testament stories.

Junior (10-12 years old) and Teen (13-15 years old) explore a more in-depth chronological narrative of the Bible over five years. In Junior, the narrative spans from the war in heaven to the ascension of Jesus. This chronology continues in Teen through the great controversy lens, from the early Christian church through the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, Adventist history, and finally the new earth. Daily readings, such as engaging narrative, Bible study, key takeaways, reflection questions, journaling, prayer ideas, and mission challenges, are included.

A thematic approach is used for Youth (15-18 years old), with more complex young adult themes included (theological and practical) in the scope and sequence. A longer weekly reading is shared, which can also be broken into daily readings, along with deeper Bible study, key takeaways, reflection questions, journaling, prayer ideas, and mission challenges.

At all levels the Alive in Jesus curriculum aims to teach and intentionally build a child’s relationship with God, and their Bible knowledge, through studying His Word. The narratives in the lessons are also enhanced with inspired insights from the writings of Ellen White, and each level encourages deep thinking and reflection, prayer ideas, mission challenges, and Bible memorization of promises.
Features and Foci

The Alive in Jesus Sabbath School curriculum is full of special features that contribute toward establishing the overall goals of the curriculum:

**FAITH DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**

Since a primary goal of this curriculum is to intentionally build the faith of children of all ages, the lesson structure (length, narrative style, parental engagement, enhancement activities, witnessing and service challenges, Sabbath foci, etc.) all focus around best practices to build faith.

At the younger levels, one goal is to support parents with these lessons so they can “thoroughly act their part, giving them line upon line, and precept upon precept, making their lessons short and interesting, and teaching them not only by precept but by example.”\(^1\) Experiential learning ideas are included in order to extend the learning, for “too much talk will lead them to loathe even spiritual instruction, just as overeating burdens the stomach and lessens the appetite, leading even to a loathing of food.”\(^2\)

Research reveals that faith begins developing when children are very young, but Piaget explains that the first real logical operations occur at around ages of 6 or 7.\(^3\) To strengthen faith development, clear teaching and thoughtful questions are woven throughout the curriculum as children grow older.

Each of the levels of the Alive in Jesus curriculum intentionally aims to develop faith and Bible knowledge, leading children on a seamless journey into a saving relationship with Jesus.

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\(^1\) Ellen. G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 34.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 35.
FOCUS ON NATURE
At all levels nature is a recurring feature, providing specific nature lessons and suggestions for how to encourage children and youth to be outdoors. “Many illustrations from nature are used by the Bible writers; and as we observe the things of the natural world, we shall be enabled, under the guiding of the Holy Spirit, more fully to understand the lessons of God’s Word.”4 “The fields and hills—nature’s audience chamber—should be the schoolroom for little children. Her treasures should be their textbook. The lessons thus imprinted upon their minds will not be soon forgotten.”5 Nature is incorporated in both the student lessons and the teacher’s guides.

RESOURCE KITS (younger levels)
In order to provide as much practical support to Sabbath School teachers as possible, an optional Resource Kit for teachers will be developed. Items may include: large cloth backdrops/murals on quarterly themes, wooden toys, and other kinesthetic resources to enhance the teaching of the biblical story for young learners. For the Babies level, a Resource Kit for the home is suggested so that parents can establish a daily worship routine.

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5 Ibid., p. 48.
PARENT ENGAGEMENT

We know that busy parents face many joys and challenges, and we pray that this new Sabbath School curriculum will encourage parents and caregivers in their own spiritual walk, as they love and nurture their children. Since discipleship and spiritual growth is a main goal of this curriculum, we also aim to provide opportunities for spiritual intergenerational dialogue between parents and children. “Children must see in the lives of their parents that consistency which is in accordance with their faith.”

Ideally, this curriculum will provide a platform for parents to use as family worship. We are given this advice: “Take time to read to your children. . . . Form a home reading circle, in which every member of the family shall lay aside the busy cares of the day, and unite in study.” While this is particularly true for the younger levels, the Junior, Teen and Youth lessons can also be used for family worship, discussion, and further reading study, based on what is provided, in addition to private study.

SYNTHESIS OF LEARNING/QUARTERLY CHALLENGE (younger levels)

The concept of “hear one, do one, teach one” in children’s learning is synthesized through a Quarterly Challenge; a culmination of weekly learning. This is brought together in the Welcoming the Sabbath (Friday night family time) activity for Kindergarten and Primary, and in a variety of other ways in the older levels. The goal of this challenge is for the child to have a special family celebration on Friday night before the Thirteenth Sabbath, and to then share with their church family their ideas and discoveries of the past 13 weeks. For younger children, parents help lead this.

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Careful consideration and data-driven decisions have been made around the choice of illustrations and design, so that the lessons are brought to life through the pictures. Interpreting pictures is an important cognitive function, as nonverbals convey meaning and help us interpret the world around us. Different illustrators have been chosen for each level, so that the reader experience “steps up” as the levels progress and the children grow. Teen and Youth draw on stock images with a more contemporary style. The artwork across all levels seeks to speak to a culturally diverse audience so that children and young people from across the world can relate to the lesson designs. From artwork to content, Alive in Jesus endeavors to speak to a diverse, global audience that is bound together by a shared mission and message.

MUSIC

New music is being created for the lower levels that specifically communicates the lesson’s messages. For Beginner, music will be a central part of the teacher’s guide, with both older, familiar songs included, and some new music. For Kindergarten and Primary, a theme song for each quarter will be created that focuses specifically on the quarterly theme. In addition to this, other specific songs, such as a welcome song, prayer song, celebration song, and goodbye song, will be added to the teacher’s guides to make the Sabbath School hour more memorable for the children.

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1 Ibid., p. 482.
2 Ibid., p. 38.
WORD OF THE WEEK (Kindergarten and Primary)

In these two levels, which have narratives that align with each other, a Word of the Week is shared that also threads throughout the weekly narrative. Since modeling is so important at this age and stage for children, parents are encouraged to model and use the Word of the Week in everyday life.

VARIETY

In all levels, having a variety of activities and application modes in both the student lessons and the teacher’s guides is an important goal. The Sabbath page of each lesson incorporates a variety of fascinating lessons from nature, archaeology, culture, science, and health that teach us about God, as well as interesting mission and Adventist history stories. In every case the weekly focus is maintained and applied through all activities and teaching points to strengthen a growing faith.
Teaching Framework

We are told that the “all-important thing” in education “should be the conversion of . . . students, that they may have a new heart and life. The object of the Great Teacher is the restoration of the image of God in the soul, and every teacher in our schools should work in harmony with this purpose.”¹ As such, the role of the Sabbath School teacher is to facilitate the growing environment for the Holy Spirit to transform children into faithful disciples of Christ. For the younger levels, there is also a natural opportunity to support spiritual growth in the lives of the parents of young children.

With this in mind, the Alive in Jesus Sabbath School Curriculum Teacher’s Guide has a focus on process (how we teach) as well as content (what we teach). This also aligns with our goals for the weekly take-home lesson study.

The five steps below reflect the general framework approach we plan to take for the younger levels, with these elements also reflected in the older levels.

HOOK
In addition to making all children feel welcome in Sabbath School, this segment sets the scene for the weekly lesson by engaging students from the outset to elicit the interest of students and establish the context for the lesson. “True education is not forcing instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind. The mental powers must be awakened, the interest aroused.”²

HEAD
God appeals to His people to seek Him first and to love Him above all else. We are to hide His words in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11) and to teach these words “diligently” to our children, to “talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

The goal of this segment is to build on what our children may already know and what they have studied at home during the week. While this segment is primarily teacher-directed, students are invited to discover, explore, and interact with what they learn in different ways, for “teachers should lead students to think, and clearly to understand the truth for themselves. It is not enough for the teacher to explain or for the student to believe; inquiry must be awakened, and the student must be drawn out to state the truth in his own language.... This may be a slow process; but it is of more value than rushing over important subjects without due consideration.”³

HEART
As we share the stories and truths of the Bible, the Holy Spirit can move upon our open hearts to transform us. Hosea 6:3 says it this way:

“Let us know,
Let us pursue the knowledge of the L ORD.
His going forth is established as the morning;
He will come to us like the rain,
Like the latter and former rain to the earth.”

Regarding the importance of heart conversion, we are told: “The mere knowledge of truth is not enough. We may possess this, but the tenor of our thoughts may not be changed. The heart must be converted and sanctified.”4 For indeed, “[Jesus] spoke directly to every mind and appealed to every heart. He watched the faces of His hearers, marked the lighting up of the countenance, the quick, responsive glance, which told that truth had reached the soul.”5

In this segment the goal is to bring our children to the feet of Jesus through worship, reflection, object lessons, and discussion so that they will not only gain knowledge but also be personally convicted of what has been learned.

HAND
The natural response to a heart conversion is to take action. James 1:22 says, “Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (NIV). Ellen White states, “Love and loyalty to Christ are the spring of all true service. In the heart touched by His love, there is begotten a desire to work for Him. Let this desire be encouraged and rightly guided.”6

In this step, every child will be given the opportunity to learn how they can contribute to their families, their church, their communities, and the broader mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The goal is to involve all children in the mission of the church through inspirational mission stories and practical opportunities to serve others, as a result of the story or lesson theme.

“With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world!”7

HOORAY!
Educational research tells us that learning is more effective, and more likely to be retained, when it’s accompanied with joy. “People learn more, and learn to love learning—when they enjoy the process.”8

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5 Ellen G. White, Education, p. 231.
6 Ibid., p. 268.
7 Ibid., p. 271.
In this final step, children will be given an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate what they have learned about God from His Word, or what He has done for them or someone else (in the context of mission). This short segment may take the form of children praising God for what He has done, acknowledging the children for what they have learned, or a short theme-based application that brings joy to the children.

The inclusion of this final segment aims for the children to leave Sabbath School with clear application to their own lives, in the form of joy, since “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).
Global Input

It’s no small task to create a curriculum for a global audience with many varied needs and contexts. We are working steadily with our team of curriculum writers, editors, copy editors, designers, and illustrators, and have put in place a rigorous paid review and pilot process that will occur across all Divisions, along with input from the Biblical Research Institute. In addition to this, a lower-level and upper-level steering committee has been established to give guidance to the development of the Alive in Jesus curriculum. These committees have global representation from Children’s Ministries Division directors, Youth directors, curriculum specialists, educators/teachers, and parents, along with a few from the General Conference (GC) Sabbath School Personal Ministries (SSPM) Department.

Our Role

Today we have one of the greatest opportunities in history—to love, teach, guide, and nurture our children into a lifelong relationship with Jesus, based on the solid truths of the Bible, so they can be living witnesses to a dying world.

May the Lord be able to say of every child, young person, and parent who shares or studies this curriculum:

“I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people”
(2 Corinthians 6:16).