

## COOL TOOLS FOR SABBATH SCHOOL

# Sabbath School Organization

How could over 600,000 newly freed slaves ever hope to conquer a well fortified land “inhabited by a powerful race”?<sup>1</sup>

One of the keys to their success was organization. “The government of Israel was characterized by the most thorough organization. . . . God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel. Moses stood as their visible leader, by God’s appointment, to administer the laws in His name.

“From the elders of the tribes a council of seventy was afterward chosen to assist Moses in the general affairs of the nation. Next came the priests, who consulted the Lord in the sanctuary. Chiefs, or princes, ruled over the tribes. Under these were ‘captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens,’ and, lastly, officers who might be employed for special duties.’ Deuteronomy 1:15.”<sup>2</sup>

The Israelites’ camp also was highly organized, divided into three sections, each with its particular place in the encampment. The sanctuary was in the middle of these sections.

These lessons in organization served the Israelites well as they prepared for battle with Jericho. As they marched around this city’s strongholds, the watchmen marveled over the spectacle: “First came the warriors.... Then the ark of God, surrounded by a halo of divine glory, was borne by priests clad in the dress denoting their sacred office. The army of Israel followed, each tribe under its standard.”<sup>3</sup>

But when Jericho’s walls finally tumbled, it was not solely because of Israel’s organizational abilities. “Only in the assurance of a strength not their own could the Israelites hope for success.”<sup>4</sup>

So it is with the Sabbath School. Organization, coupled with God’s strength, will increase its vitality, promote its growth, multiply its power for good, and ensure its permanency.

### A Brief History

When, at the prompting of Jethro, Moses set leaders over groups of ten, and others over groups of fifty, he established an early model for small-group Sabbath Schools. The early Christian church spread rapidly by means of similar small groups of believers following Pentecost. The disciples fostered small groups of believers, led by the Holy Spirit for Bible study, prayer, and ministry (Acts 2).

In reformation times, men like Gerhardt Groot

established Christian schools with groups dedicated to prayer, meditation, Bible study, and ministry. Martin Luther realized that proclamation alone was not enough to bring about the reformation. He first designed a catechism to teach children how to pray. The Gospel spread to other countries through similar means under the leadership of men like Columba and Zinzendorf. The Wesleys formed small groups for Christian edification and service. Robert Raikes started a Sunday School movement in England designed first to teach children of the streets how to read so they could study the Bible.

Early pioneers in the Seventh-day Adventist church recognized the need and potential for believers to fellowship together around the Word of God, and to band together for service. The worldwide Sabbath School organization of today is the outgrowth of more than a century of prayerful study and experience on the part of Sabbath School workers. The first Sabbath Schools were independent units, sustaining no relationship with one another. This was as early in our denominational history as 1853 to 1855. Not until 1870, and the years following, did a single organization develop, with a superintendent and teachers for various classes according to age. In 1877 the State Sabbath School Association was formed. This organization brought together all the Sabbath Schools within the state. The General Conference session of 1878 recognized the value of such an organization and thereby formed the General Conference Sabbath School Association. In the same year ten other state associations were organized. Also at that time a system of reporting was devised. By the close of 1878 the first statistical report showed 177 Sabbath Schools with 5,851 members.

### Publications

From that historic hour in 1852 when Elder James White wrote the first Sabbath School lessons, until the present day, there has been marked development in the preparation of Sabbath School lessons. Specialists in the field of education have prepared an excellent series of lessons for the beginner, kindergarten, and primary divisions.



Appropriate lessons are also available for junior, earliten, youth, and collegiate/young adult levels. For adults there are four editions of the Sabbath School *Bible Study Guide*: Standard, Large Print, Easy English, and Teacher's Edition.

Program helps and teaching aids for each level of the Sabbath School provide information and instruction for officers, leaders, and teachers.

The first offerings of the Sabbath School were used for expenses. In 1885 the first Sabbath School gifts to missions were made by the Upper Columbia Conference. But it was not until 1912 that all schools were giving all their offerings to missions. From the beginning of Sabbath School organization, the schools had elected their own officers. In 1903, however, delegates to the General Conference session in Oakland, California, voted that henceforth the church should elect Sabbath School officers as it does other officers of the church.

### **Simple Structure**

There are necessary offices to be filled with specified duties to be performed but mere routine of formal service will be ineffective. The instruction given through the Spirit of Prophecy should be heeded in every plan: "The purity and simplicity of the Sabbath school must not be swallowed up in such an endless variety of forms that sufficient time cannot be devoted to religious interests. The beauty and success of the school are in its simplicity and earnestness in serving God."<sup>5</sup>

### **Election of Sabbath School Leaders**

Sabbath School leaders may be elected by the church, and nominated by the same committee or ministry placement team, that guides in the selection of officers and placement of ministries for the church. The leaders to be chosen at the annual election may include the general superintendent and assistant superintendents, adult teachers—an assistant superintendent for membership having special responsibility for missing members and prospective members, and an assistant superintendent for evangelism having charge of Branch Sabbath School evangelism, Vacation Bible School, Community Guest Days, Decision Days, Neighborhood Bible Clubs, Story Hours, etc.

A Sabbath School secretary and assistants may be needed as well as leaders for adult, youth, earliten, junior, primary, kindergarten, and beginner divisions. Additional officers may be needed such as leader for the extension division (with assistants where needed), an Investment secretary, and a Vacation Bible School director. The Sabbath School Council appoints

division teachers, secretaries, greeters, assistant division leaders, music directors, and pianists and/or organists. Vacancies occurring between annual elections are filled by the Sabbath School Council. Small Sabbath Schools will not require all the officers mentioned above.

### **The Sabbath School Council**

The Sabbath School Council consists of the following: superintendent (chairperson), assistant superintendents, secretary, assistant secretaries, division leaders, Investment secretary, Vacation Bible School director, the pastor, an elder, and teachers (if elected by the church).

As soon as possible after the election of the Sabbath School officers, the Sabbath School Council should meet to plan for the various phases of the Sabbath School work.

The Sabbath School is an intricate organization, with numerous functional parts that must be kept in efficient running order. This is the responsibility of the general superintendent. Everything that concerns the Sabbath School is proper for the consideration of the Sabbath School Council. Regular monthly meetings of the Sabbath School Council is recommended.

### **Selection of Teachers**

Teachers of all divisions of the Sabbath School may be elected by the church along with the church officers. Where this practice is followed, careful study should be given to the needs of all groups. It is advisable to consult with the division leaders, particularly in the children's areas. If teachers are elected by the board, vacancies occurring in the teaching staff between the annual elections shall be filled by the church board after counseling with the Sabbath School Council.

As an alternative, the Sabbath School Council may select an adequate corps of consecrated, capable teachers for the entire Sabbath School; this includes securing the very best possible talent for the children's divisions. The requirements of the high calling of Sabbath School teaching,<sup>6</sup> should be considered carefully.

### **Sabbath School Officers and Their Duties**

Duties of the superintendent and the secretary are presented in detail in other leaflets; only brief mention of them will be made here.

### **General Superintendent**

The superintendent is the overall leader of the Sabbath School. As chairman of the Sabbath School

Council, he or she should lead the other leaders into operations that will foster individual spiritual growth as well as increase in numbers of members. The Sabbath School superintendent should not only demonstrate good organizational skills, but should manifest the fruits of spirit-filled growth ministry. For details of the superintendent's duties, consult the leaflet entitled, "The Sabbath School Superintendent," and *The Sabbath School Manual*.

### **Assistant Superintendent**

This leader should serve as an assistant to the superintendent, carrying forward the regular work of the school and bearing such responsibilities as may be assigned him or her by the superintendent. In the absence of the superintendent, the assistant takes full charge of the school. The Sabbath School is a training school for workers of all classes. As a result of giving the assistants the proper training and experience, future leading officers will be provided.

### **Membership Superintendent**

The Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department recommends that in every Sabbath School an intensive, conscientious, and persevering, year-round effort be made to enroll every missing church member as a regular Sabbath School member, as well as to promote, Sabbath by Sabbath, faithful attendance of all regular members.

An assistant superintendent may be designated as the membership superintendent. It is understood that the major part of his or her time will be devoted to the following duties:

1. To sponsor full Sabbath School membership, especially concentrating on enrolling all missing church members and fostering faithful Sabbath School attendance.
2. To be responsible for keeping an up-to-date membership file system, securing the needed information from the church clerk and Sabbath School secretary, thus determining who the missing church members are.
3. To bring to the Sabbath School Council, with teachers present, a complete list of names and addresses of missing church members, at which time the council assigns each missing church member to a class, entering the name and address in the prospective-member section of the class record booklet.
4. To submit to each regular monthly Sabbath School Council meeting up-to-date reports of progress being made in enrolling these prospective members as regular members.
5. To cooperate closely with the Sabbath School

extension division leader, making sure the leader has all the names of those who, because of circumstances find it physically impossible to come to Sabbath School. Such members should be faithfully enrolled in the extension division and regularly contacted by members under the leadership of the extension division leader.

6. To seek to train and empower Sabbath School teachers for the task of reaching missing church members, encouraging a regular week-by-week program of visitation on the part of teachers and regular class members.

7. To coordinate the ministries of each class, including attention to attendance of regular as well as prospective members.

### **Assistant Superintendent for Evangelism**

It is the responsibility of the assistant superintendent for evangelism to:

1. Direct Sabbath School outreach in the community.
2. Plan with division leaders and teachers for class evangelism activities.
3. Encourage each class to set a goal for souls, then to work and pray to achieve that goal.
4. Plan with division leaders for Community Guest Days.
5. Plan with the Vacation Bible School director for Vacation Bible Schools and follow-up programs.
6. Plan with appropriate division leaders for Branch Sabbath Schools, including Neighborhood Bible Clubs and Story Hours.
7. Develop and implement other special programs designed to enlarge the Sabbath School.

For further information, see *The Sabbath School Manual*, chapter on "Evangelism."

### **Secretary**

The duties of the secretary are presented in the leaflet entitled "The Sabbath School Secretary." The secretary is the superintendent's chief assistant, who is responsible for the keeping of records, giving reports, ordering supplies, distributing materials, collecting Sabbath School offerings, and turning them over to the treasurer of the church.

### **Assistant Secretary**

The principal duty of the assistant secretary is to help the secretary in the distribution of class supplies and the collection of class record cards, and to assist as needed. He or she should learn how to keep the secretary's record book. When the secretary is absent, the entire responsibility of the office falls upon the assistant.

### **Leaders of the Adult Division**

Leadership of the adult division should be under the direction of the general superintendent, who will prepare quarterly an outline or schedule of dates when each of the leaders elected for the division will lead out in the programs. The general superintendent and a maximum of four leaders will conduct all adult Sabbath School programs during the year.

### **Leaders of Children's Divisions**

If the various divisions have separate rooms, the relation of each leader to his or her division is similar to that of the superintendent to the whole school. The division leader recommends the teachers for the division, submitting the list to the Sabbath School Council for approval or change; makes out the program for the division exercises, devises plans for the promotion of division interests, supervises the records of the division, arranges for division teachers' meetings, forms classes, transfers members from one class to another as may seem best, cooperates with the superintendent in all plans laid for the betterment of the school as a whole, and consults with the Sabbath School Council regarding all matters concerning the division.

### **Extension Division Leader**

The extension division leader should secure the names of all members not in regular attendance at the Sabbath School, and each quarter provide them with extension division record envelopes, Sabbath School lessons, mission quarterlies (adult, teen, and children), as well as children's papers from the supply received by the school. All members of this division should be visited by members or the leader at least once a quarter. Additional helpers, one for each additional ten members, should be appointed to assist in this work. The extension division leader turns over to the Sabbath School secretary the offerings and records at the end of each quarter and also makes a report to the school.

### **Music**

Music is a very important part of the Sabbath School service. It should be planned and conducted as a sacred part of worship. The chorister directs the singing. In a large school he or she may also lead the orchestra. The chorister, in counsel with the program leader, arranges for special music. Usually the program leader chooses the songs for Sabbath School, but he may arrange for the chorister to do this, with the understanding that the music should relate in some way to the program theme for the Sabbath School session.

The chorister, organist, pianist, orchestra director, and other musicians should not only possess necessary qualifications as musicians but should be examples in attire, deportment, punctuality, and faithfulness. The Sabbath School Council should give consideration to the overall music program of the Sabbath School. As members of the Sabbath School team appointed by the Sabbath School Council, the chorister and the organist or pianist should help in planning the Sabbath School music.

### **Hospitality Ministry**

At one of its first meetings at the beginning of the year, the Sabbath School Council should choose a hospitality team. It is the duty of this ministry to make sure that visitors are welcomed.

Greeters should be at their stations early Sabbath morning to welcome all members and visitors, giving special attention to visitors. Whether young or old, all visitors should be ushered to the proper Sabbath School division and introduced to a leader, teacher, or member.

The welcoming committee should be in charge of the visitor's register. Some schools follow the plan of having the person in charge of the register give a list of all visitors to the superintendent so that they can be mentioned by name before the close of the Sabbath School.

Hospitality ministry leaders may coordinate the efforts of the hospitality team to meet people in the parking lot with an umbrella on a rainy day, visit with them, invite them to fellowship meal, help them feel comfortable, invite them home for dinner, and see that another team member invites them the following Sabbath.

### **Ushers**

Ushers are needed in large Sabbath Schools to assist in welcoming and seating visitors who have been greeted by the hospitality team, seeing that they are placed in proper divisions and classes and made comfortable for the session. Ushers also attend all entrances during the program, so that there may be no interruption during prayer, the presentation of the secretary's report, special music, and any other special exercise. The ushers may also care for the ventilation as may be required.

The General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department has prepared a special leaflet entitled "Welcoming and Ushering," available online and from your local conference or mission Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department.

## DIVISIONS AND CLASSES

### Grouping of Members

Sabbath School membership varies in age from the babe in its parent's arms to the gray-haired great-grandparent. Proper division and classification of the members is advisable in order to obtain the best results in learning.

A student may have widely varying experience dependent upon age, environment, and academic background which will affect his or her study of the Bible. If the proper classification is made, each teacher may enlarge upon or simplify the subject, according to the comprehension of the pupils.

Lesson provision is made for eight divisions: beginner, kindergarten, primary, junior, earliteen, youth, young adult, and adult. The grade in the day school or the age of the pupils, as outlined in the following paragraphs, should be followed carefully.

### Beginner Division

This division takes in babies from birth through 3 years. In very small schools, or where there are very few small children, the beginner may be combined with the kindergarten.

In large Sabbath Schools it may be advisable to have two beginner divisions—"Beginner A" from birth to 18 months and "Beginner B" from 18 months through the third year.

Additional helps and stories are found in the weekly paper, *Our Little Friend*. Separate program helps and teaching aids are available for these age groups, with an entire year's material in loose-leaf form. The teaching aids are correlated with the four short lessons at the back of the standard beginner Bible study guide.

Lessons for the beginner are provided in a quarterly Bible study guide. Included are special helps for parents to assist them in studying with their children.

Special helps for leaders and teachers in the beginner division are provided in *Beginner Program Helps* and *Beginner Teaching Aids*. These are published quarterly and are available on a subscription basis through the Adventist Book Center or may be downloaded online.

For a detailed presentation of the beginner division, see the leaflet entitled, "The Beginner Division."

### Kindergarten Division

The kindergarten division includes children from 4 through 6 years of age. It is recommended that promotion to the primary division take place not more than twice during the year. The usual time for the promotion of a child from the kindergarten to the

primary division is at the first group promotion after the child's seventh birthday. Because there are individual differences in the development of each child, and because other circumstances vary in each case, the leader and Council may advance or delay the promotion of a particular child according to his needs.

A child who cannot read should not, for that reason, be denied promotion to the primary division. Helps for parents and teachers, along with the lesson for the kindergarten child, appear in the Kindergarten Bible study guide. Additional helps and stories are found in the weekly paper, *Our Little Friend*. For instruction on conducting the kindergarten division, see Sabbath School leaflet entitled, "The Kindergarten Division."

Special helps for leaders and teachers in the kindergarten division are provided respectively in *Kindergarten Program Helps* and *Kindergarten Teaching Aids*. These are published quarterly and are available on a subscription basis through the Adventist Book Center or may be downloaded online.

### Combined Divisions

In some small churches it may be necessary to have all the children under the age of ten meeting together in one division. This is less than ideal, but where combined divisions are necessary special program helps have been prepared on a three-year recurring cycle. These helps are known as *Combined Program Helps for the Small Church*, Series A, B, C.

Even though children from the primary, kindergarten, and beginner divisions are meeting together for the program, separate classes for the study of the lesson should be planned. Suggestions for lesson presentation for each age group are in the regular teaching aids.

### Primary Division

The primary division is for children 7 through 9 years of age. Because children are sometimes not enrolled in school until they are of primary age, it will sometimes be necessary to accept children into the primary division who cannot read. The primary leader should ascertain (upon promotion into the primary division) whether or not a child can read. The leader and teachers shall then make the necessary adaptations to assist the nonreaders.

It is recommended that promotion to the junior division take place not more than twice during the year. The usual time for promotion is during the first group promotion after a child's tenth birthday. In every case a child should be promoted only on the recommendation of the primary division leader and the approval of the Sabbath School Council. Because there are individual differences in the development of

each child, and because other circumstances vary in each case, the leader and council may advance or delay the promotion of a particular child according to his needs. Promotion in all divisions should take place on the same Sabbath.

Lessons and activities for the primary division appear in the Primary Bible study guide. Additional helps, stories, and activities are also found in the weekly paper *Primary Treasure*.

The Sabbath School leaflet entitled, “The Primary Division” gives more detail on conducting this division of the Sabbath School.

Special helps for leaders and teachers in the primary division are provided in *Primary Program Helps and Primary Teaching Aids*. These are published quarterly and are available on a subscription basis through the Adventist Book Center or may be downloaded online. The Mission quarterly, children’s edition, is suited for use in the primary level.

### **Junior Division**

The junior division cares for boys and girls who are 10 through 12 years of age (fifth and sixth grades of school). Promotion to the earliteen division may come on the regular promotion day, set by the Sabbath School Council, after they are promoted to the seventh year of school.

Where there are not enough earliteen youth to form a separate division, a combined junior-earliteen division should be formed. In that case, the only promotion would be into the youth division during the fourteenth year and after they have completed the eighth year in school.

Statistics show that more individuals are baptized at age 12 than at any other single year of life. Therefore, these young people need some of the finest teachers the Sabbath School can provide.

The Sabbath School lessons for juniors appear weekly in the *PowerPoint* Bible study guides. Special helps for teachers can be located in the *PowerPoint* Teacher’s Edition, and the material related to both the junior and earliteen lessons also appears in *Guide*. Theme talks, object lessons, and other program suggestions are given in the *Junior-Earliteen Program Helps* and are available on a subscription basis through the Adventist Book Center or downloaded online.

*Mission*, children’s edition, which contains thrilling stories from world mission lands and promotes the Thirteenth Sabbath Special Projects Offering, is available (free) online and through local Adventist Books Centers.

### **Earliteen Division**

The earliteen division is for youth who are 12 through 14 years of age (seventh and eighth grades of school). Because of developmental differences among young people of this age, it is left with the local Sabbath School Council to decide at what point after they have completed the eighth year of schooling they should be promoted to the youth division. Wherever there are a few young people in the earliteen group, it is advisable to provide a Sabbath School program for them in a separate division.

Special earliteen lessons are provided in the *Real-Time Faith* Bible study guide, which may be ordered by subscription from the Adventist Book Center or downloaded online. A teacher’s edition is also available, and material related to both the junior and earliteen lessons also appears in *Guide*. Theme talks, object lessons, and other program suggestions are given in the *Junior-Earliteen Program Helps*, available on a subscription basis through the Adventist Book Centers. *Mission*, teen edition, is also available (free).

### **Youth Division**

The youth division is primarily for young people 15 through 18 years of age (ninth to twelfth grades of school).

The Sabbath School program includes the four main focal points of the Sabbath School objectives—fellowship, outreach, Bible study, and mission. The formats of the adult division program are recommended also for the youth division. Appropriate program and lesson material are available through local Adventist Book Centers. *Mission*, youth edition, is also recommended.

If there is only one class of youth people in the school, a division leader need not necessarily be elected for them as the classes will undoubtedly meet with the adults to share in their opening exercises. Participation is one important key to interest. Though youth need careful guidance and supervision, it is important to involve them in both planning and conducting the Sabbath School program. Certain latitude should be allowed for youthful initiative and creativity in methods of presentation while maintaining the basic emphasis of the Sabbath School.

Sabbath School lessons maybe found in *Cornerstone Connections*, which can be purchased on a subscription basis from Adventist Book Centers or downloaded online.

### **Young Adult Division**

The young adult division is primarily established

for individuals 19 through 30 years of age where larger congregations exist.

The purpose for the young adult division is to meet the spiritual, mental, and social needs of this age. Programs may vary but are basically designed after the adult program. The program may include discussions on various contemporary issues, including the church and its mission, and ways to share one's faith. Also, there should be a sharing time during which the blessings, deliverances, and special evidences of God's work in one's life are related. Group prayer and the study of the Sabbath School lesson, with definite application to the needs of this group, should also be a part of the program.

Sabbath School lessons may be found in *CQ*, the *Collegiate Quarterly*, which can be purchased on a subscription basis from Adventist Book Centers or downloaded online.

### **Young Adult Sabbath School Program**

To meet the needs of contemporary society, there may be a need to minimize presentations and to allow more time in class for fellowship, discussion, outreach, and life-related discussion of the lesson. In places where there is limited training in small group dynamics and where a more prescribed program is desired, a typical program might include the following:

09:15-09:30 Song service and prayer

09:30-09:50 Guest speaker: 10-minute talk (contemporary and social issues, the church and mission); 10 minutes for discussion on the topic

09:50-10:00 Emphasis on mission

10:00-10:05 Sharing time (sharing of blessings, deliverances, special evidences of God's work and direction in their lives)

10:05-10:10 Group prayer

10:10-10:45 Lesson study (divide into groups; take the offering during the first part of lesson period

10:45-10:50 Closing announcements and prayer

### **Adult Division**

Classes of adults form this division. The general or adult superintendent is the leader. In very large schools where administrative affairs fill the superintendent's time, assistant superintendents and program leaders may share this responsibility. Lessons are provided for this division in three editions: standard, large print, and easy English. The Easy English Edition is prepared especially for the hearing impaired and those whose second language is English, but it is used by others as well.

A teacher's edition of the quarterly is also available. Program helps for leaders are provided

quarterly in *Adult Program Helps* and in *Leadership* (for the North American Division), available on a subscription basis through the Adventist Book Center. *Mission*, a quarterly which provides weekly presentations on the world mission program, is available free to all churches. The main part of the church auditorium usually affords space for the adult classes. Where possible, however, additional rooms should be provided.

### **The Extension Division**

The extension division of the Sabbath School is to take the benefits of the Sabbath School to those who cannot regularly attend the parent school. Traveling workers, national service personnel, and others who because of age, illness, isolation, or similar challenges, are prevented from regular attendance at the parent school are embraced in the provisions of the extension division. In each Sabbath School, where there are persons in the foregoing categories, there should be an extension division, with an extension division leader. There should be an assistant leader for each additional ten members above the first ten. For detailed instruction on conducting the extension division, refer to the Sabbath School leaflet, "The Extension Division."

## **THE SABBATH SCHOOL PROGRAM**

### **A Meaningful and Well-ordered Sabbath School**

Meaning should not be lost in the mechanics of the machinery of Sabbath School. Growing Adult Sabbath Schools are focusing on the experience of fellowship, prayer, Bible Study, outreach, and missions more than going through long exercises and routines.

In biblical times, however, God outlined the sanctuary services to the smallest details to be carefully observed. In the services of the Sabbath School, each feature of the program also should be carefully planned. Every detail of the general organization and arrangement of the divisions and classes should be properly prepared, so that each individual concerned will be intelligent regarding his or her place and part in the service. This should be done in sufficient time before the Sabbath so that all will be ready when the hour of service arrives. All who are to have part in the program should be notified of their appointment at least one week in advance of the Sabbath on which they are to share in the service.

All leaders of the Sabbath School on duty for the day should arrive early. The superintendent, the secretary, the song leader, the pianist, the division

leaders, and the teachers should be on hand 15 to 30 minutes before the opening of the session.

Sabbath School may begin with small-group Sabbath School class dynamics or with plenary time. Music should become an integral part of the service. Some will want to begin with a lively song service of 10 to 15 minutes as a fitting prelude to a worshipful Sabbath School. Others may want to have corporate time after classes meet, with praise and testimony.

If the Sabbath School begins with class time, it is essential that the hospitality team welcome guests and lead them to a class that has a comfortable climate for visitors. It is well to have a class in the sanctuary where the guest may attend.

As suggested for the young adult Sabbath School, the adult Sabbath School may consider minimizing presentations and allowing more time in class for fellowship, discussion, outreach, and life-related discussion of the lesson. In places where there is limited training in small-group dynamics and where more prescribed programming is desired, typical programs might include the following:

#### **Adult Program Plan No. 1**

09:15-09:30 Song service

09:30-09:34 Opening prayer and superintendent's remarks

09:34-09:42 Keeping on course

- a. Progress report
- b. Evangelism, or
- c. Investment, or
- d. Birthday-thank offering, or
- e. Improvement, or
- f. Special Sabbath School-related feature

09:42-09:46 Musical selection

09:46-09:56 World mission emphasis

09:56-10:36 Class activities

a. Mission and expense offering, class records, class evangelism, and visitation

b. Assignments (10 minutes)

c. Lesson discussion (30 minutes)

10:36-10:40 Program preview for next week and closing

Note: The above program schedule is suitable for a church, whether or not it has separate adult classrooms. Where there are separate classrooms, and extra time is needed to reach them, the final four minutes should be added to the class period, dismissing from the individual classes.

#### **Adult Program Plan No. 2**

09:15-09:30 Service of praise and meditation

09:30-09:34 Opening prayer and superintendent's remarks

09:34-09:40 Keeping on course (items a-e in Plan No. 1)

09:40-09:50 World mission emphasis

09:50-10:30 Class activities (as in Plan No. 1)

10:30-10:40 Special feature and closing

Note: Program Plan No. 2 can be used in large or small churches that do not have separate adult classrooms.

#### **Adult Program Plan No. 3**

09:15-09:30 Song service

09:30-09:34 Opening prayer and superintendent's remarks

09:34-09:44 World mission emphasis

09:44-10:24 Class activities (as in Plan No. 1)

10:24-10:28 Musical selection

10:28-10:36 Keeping on course (items a-f in Plan No. 1)

10:36-10:40 Program preview and closing

Note: The third program schedule can be used under the same conditions as Plan No. 2.

#### **Variation Without Innovation**

Any set program can get into a rut. The very routine of the Sabbath School service will become tiresome, even lifeless, unless prayerful planning is given to it to ensure freshness and interest. The service can be greatly varied without disarranging the regular program framework. In all variation there should never be any curtailment of the 30- to 50-minute discussion of the lesson.

#### **Safeguarding the Sabbath School**

Nothing foreign to Sabbath School work such as concerts, rallies, lectures, or special events should displace the time designated for the Sabbath School program. Every Sabbath School period is to be wholly devoted to Sabbath School activity.

#### **ORGANIZING THE SABBATH SCHOOL**

##### **Where to Conduct the Adult Sabbath School**

The Sabbath School should be conducted with reverence and dignity, so that the whole program is a worship service of the church. As such it can properly be held in the sanctuary or in a school auditorium. In planning for new church buildings, rooms should be provided for adult classes. And wherever possible the same provision should be made in existing church buildings. This provides an atmosphere of participation.

##### **Classes**

The small class of from five to seven members in

the children's divisions and from ten to twelve in the youth and adult division is found to give the most gratifying results for order and development. Members can sit close enough to see and hear their teacher and each other, without straining ears, voices, or eyes. The effectiveness of the Sabbath School can be enhanced by a good teacher/class relationship. The individual responsibility of regular attendance and lesson study is felt more keenly by the members in a small class.

The leaders of small schools should plan as carefully for few members as for many. And if there is just one child in Sabbath School, remember that his or her need is just as great as if he or she were a member of a large class.

### **Seating**

Plan the seating of divisions carefully. Reduce to a minimum the necessity for the moving of classes or divisions. Whenever possible, the young adult, earliten, junior, primary, kindergarten, and beginner divisions should each have their own room. Where this is impossible, the building may, by screens or curtains, be converted into division rooms. Children should sit with their backs toward the windows. Light behind a leader makes it difficult to see him or her. If any of the classes is to be placed at a disadvantage because of inadequate room, it should be the adults, and not the children or youth.

### **Rooms in Order**

It must be the regular duty of one person in each division to put everything in readiness for the Sabbath School service. This means setting up curtains, screens, and audio-visual equipment; looking after chalkboards and supplies, placing maps and picture rolls on standards or hooks, arranging chairs and tables for the opening exercises. Division leaders should make a last inspection before the opening exercises.

### **Sabbath School Expense Money**

It is a shortsighted policy that curtails expenditure for needed supplies. Our schools should be equipped with Sabbath School Bible study guides, program helps and teaching aids on all levels, Picture rolls, visual aids, object illustrations, maps, chalkboards, and miscellaneous supplies. A Sabbath School library should be available for Sabbath School workers.

It is quite essential that each Sabbath School adopt a workable plan to provide sufficient expense money for supplies. Often this is included in church expense.

The following action was taken by the General Conference Committee at its 1961 Autumn Council:

“WHEREAS, Our Sabbath School offerings are the largest single source of revenue to our mission funds; therefore

“We recommend, . . . That offerings taken during the Sabbath School period be limited to the Sabbath School mission offerings . . . [the regular Sabbath School offering, the Birthday-Thank Offering, the Investment Fund, and the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering], and the regular Sabbath School expense offering; and that there be no dividing of the mission funds for Sabbath School expense, building projects, or for any other purpose whatsoever.”

### **A Soul-Winning Ministry**

“Entire consecration of soul must be maintained as much by the teachers and superintendents of our Sabbath schools as by the ministers in our pulpits, for all alike are engaged in the work of bringing souls to Christ. Each in his place is to work, as did Christ, in the spirit of love, for the erring and impenitent. This is what Christ would see in the Sabbath school work. . . . The angels of God that beheld the face of the Father in heaven are looking upon the children and youth, whom you, as living agents for God, are teaching the way of salvation. Think of this, superintendents and teachers; you are in the presence of heavenly angels, doing work the character of which will testify to your fidelity or unfaithfulness to Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Leaders**

No feature of the Sabbath School service program is to be slighted in preparation or presentation. It is all essential to the success of the Sabbath School objective, the winning of souls. The Sabbath School Council should meet regularly each month, to plan carefully every feature of the school. Too often the work of the Sabbath School is conducted in a careless way, with little or no planning for coming Sabbaths. The progressive Sabbath School worker will spend some time every day perfecting details so that the Sabbath School service may be the best it is possible to arrange. “ ‘Cursed be the one who does the Lord's work negligently’ (Jer. 48:10, NASB).

### **The Teacher or Class Facilitator**

This sacred calling of teaching can be filled only by a church member in good and regular standing, who is an example in deportment, dress, and faithfulness in all Christian duties. The teacher's task includes being with the class during the entire Sabbath School session, teaching the lesson, receiving the offerings, making a record of attendance and offerings, distributing any supplies furnished by the secretary,

and arranging for the visiting of absent members. In Sabbath School Action Units, the care coordinator shares this responsibility. The teacher should attend teachers' meetings regularly, not only to impart but to receive information and instruction as well.

The Spirit of Prophecy emphasizes the soul-winning side of the teacher's work: "When Sabbath school teachers have taught the lessons of external revelation, their work is but just begun, and they should not cease their labor until they have evidence that the precepts of heaven are not only accepted by the understanding of the pupil, but written upon the heart."<sup>8</sup>

Every teacher, no matter what his or her natural abilities may be, is better fitted for the work if he or she has the advantage of a training course that focuses upon preparation and sharing of the Sabbath School lessons. In-service training is a significant part of competent Sabbath School teaching.

It should be understood that the appointment of teachers is for one year, the same length of term for which the superintendent is elected. It is also possible that a change may be made at any time at the discretion of the officers. Even a good teacher is likely to become routine in manner and method if he or she is in charge of the same class for a long period

of time. An occasional change of teachers may be an advantage.

### Training Tools

Many valuable training aids can be obtained from the General Conference and world division Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Departments and Adventist Book Centers. These would include *LEAD*; Sabbath School leaflets, and teaching/training courses. Books written on various functions of Sabbath School work that should be studied by leaders and teachers of all divisions include *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* by Ellen G. White and *The Sabbath School Manual*. Training videos and filmstrips are available. And the Web site for the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department is a rich resource: <[SabbathSchoolPersonalMinistries.org](http://SabbathSchoolPersonalMinistries.org)>.

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 487.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 488.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 487.
5. *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 151.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-126
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 157, 158
8. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

