

Family

A stylized icon of a family of four people is integrated into the letter 'm' of the word 'Family'. The icon consists of a blue figure on the left, a yellow figure in the middle, and a red figure on the right, all with black circular heads. The figures are arranged in a slightly overlapping, vertical stack.

*Developing Family Ministry
in the Local Church*

PREFACE

The Biblical record of 'family' provides us with a picture of what God has in mind for us as His family-members. We are His children, greatly loved, cherished, nurtured and protected. He reaches out to us with unlimited love and boundless grace.

Through word and ministry Jesus made clear that all who followed Him were part of His family (Mark 3:31-35). In a very real sense, the body of Christ is a family. All Christians, whether married or single, thus exist in a family. As brothers and sisters in 'family,' God invites us to love each other and take care of each other. Our church, then, needs to demonstrate and portray this love. We are compelled to be, and act, as God's loved family.

The need for the church to strengthen and support families has become a major priority. To remain unresponsive to the growing needs and concerns of individuals and families in our congregations is to be guilty of neglect and to fail in our Christian responsibilities.

This manual is a section from the larger work, Family: A Resource for Developing Family Ministries Leaders, written by Dr Bryan Craig, and published (revised) in 2006. This section has been re-produced to assist those who require a guide for establishing Family Ministries in their local church.

If you wish to obtain a copy of the complete Manual, please contact the Family Ministries Department at your local conference.

We trust this material is helpful to you and your planning committee, and may God go with you as you set out to build an effective family ministry in your local church.

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Family

A stylized icon of a family consisting of a yellow square for a head, a blue square for a torso, and a red shape for a lower body or leg, positioned between the letters 'm' and 'i' in the word 'Family'.

How to Develop
Family Ministry in the Local Church

The Role of The Family Ministries Leader

BIBLE PRINCIPLES

Family crises cannot be the only motivation for family ministry.

The strength of the church is based in the spiritual life of its members and families. God expects families to have mutually satisfying relationships. (Mal 4:6). He desires that husbands and wives experience unity (Matt 19:5,6); that parents avoid exasperating their children, "instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Eph 6:4 NIV).

The guiding principles of the Bible direct that Christians nurture the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs of the individuals, couples and families who constitute the fabric of fellowship in the church. When the church ministers to the needs of families as Christ did, they are restored to wholeness. Families who feel complete, and have harmonious relationships, are more likely to be dedicated to God's goals. (Col 2:10).

Family crises cannot be the only motivation for family ministry. Healthy family functioning is a primary goal. A family should provide for the transmission of values, and be a witness for God in the world of His power to unify and engender the happiness of each person. The family is the ordained place where human beings can experience love to its fullest extent -romantic love, friendship love and redemptive love.

Families need to develop stable relationships patterned after God's relationship with us.

Families need to be taught the meaning of love. Love fosters health and decreases stress. "Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred." (Prov 15:17 NIV).

Families need to develop stable relationships patterned after God's relationship with us. He has declared, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Heb 13:5 NIV). God's love is unconditional, enduring and responsible.

The family is probably the best illustration God has of what He is like. A family that is spiritually healthy will manifest characteristics of humility, patience, hope and loving acceptance.

Spiritual gifts related to family ministry include teaching, encouragement, and emotional healing.

APPROPRIATE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts related to family ministry include teaching, encouragement, and emotional healing.

The gift of teaching is mentioned in three of the four major Bible passages dealing with spiritual gifts. (Rom 12:7, 1 Cor 12:28,29, and Eph 4:11). In Romans it states that if you have this gift you must see it as a service to the congregation.

As you understand the personal nature of the ministry of teaching, you will see how it enables church members to learn relational skills and experiential values, as well as objective facts and abstract concepts.

Often identified with the word 'exhortation' from the King James Version, the gift of encouragement or listening is based in the meaning of the original word "to call to one's side." (Rom 12:8). It is a special ability God gives to some to bring comfort and support to others.

This divinely balanced capacity to both comfort and challenge is necessary to

encourage growth in precisely those areas of life in which people experience failure and pain.

Most often it is physical illness that comes to mind when the gift of healing is mentioned, but that ignores the fact that the gift of miracles is mentioned as a separate gift and that where gifts of healing are mentioned (1 Cor 12:9-30) they are mentioned in the plural. God gives some individuals the ability to help others get over their hurt, anger and bitterness. This is a ministry of healing. It is the kind of healing that is often necessary for couples to repair their relationships, or for parent and child to re-establish communication, or for abused persons to learn to trust again.

DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

An on-going, effective family ministry program requires a leadership team that is thoroughly committed to ministering to the families of the church. Your first task, is to draw together a group of people willing to make such a commitment to the life of the church.

FAMILY MINISTRIES LEADER

The most important element in a family ministry team is the leader. He or she needs to be a person (or couple) who has a positive attitude about Christ, self, others and the church, and if possible, should model positive qualities of family life, and have a sincere interest in fostering the wellbeing of all families. He or she should be a person with good communication skills, have a keen interest in human relationships, and an ability to organise. The nominating committee or church board can make the selection. You may find that a person already working in one of the helping professions, such as social work, marriage and family counselling or teaching is a real asset in a position of this type.

It is important too, that he/she approaches the task of family ministry with an understanding of God's redemptive plan for families. The leader needs to be able to maintain utmost confidentiality about family matters and know how to refer critical situations for expert care.

This ministry is so large and far-reaching that the leader will need to set reasonable boundaries in order to protect his/her own family time. Some of the responsibilities of leadership should be delegated to members of the family ministries committee so that it does not become burdensome. There should be quarterly or monthly meetings of this committee to plan and prepare programs, workshops, seminars, weekend retreats and other special events.

FAMILY MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

To more effectively meet the needs of families in the church, the church board may establish a Family Ministries Committee, chaired by the Family Ministries Leader. Although this committee should not be too large in order to remain effective, appropriate church leaders should be included, as well as persons who have awareness and feeling for the varied needs of families within the church. Those members who have faced trauma in life and family experiences and grown spiritually through them may be valuable members of such a group. The committee should include both men and women, at least one single person, at least one married couple and a good cross-section of age.

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In a small church the pastor, one or two other members, and the family ministries leader may make up the team. Don't overlook people in your own congregation with skill in the helping professions. Psychologists, social workers, marriage and family counsellors, physicians, religious professionals, lawyers and teachers are all possible resource people. Check with your conference Family Ministries director as well. He or she may be able to identify potential leaders. Look beyond your congregation to community psychologists or family counsellors. A local college or hospital is also a good source of potential members.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILY MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

The Family Ministries leader needs to work closely with the Family Ministries Committee. The Committee which assists, offers counsel, and shares in the responsibility for developing and implementing the goals of Family Ministries within the local church, has the following responsibilities:

1. Assist church leadership in compiling family demographic data both within the church and the surrounding community to clarify target groups for family ministry.
2. Assist church leadership in assessing the needs of the church members for family life information, education and training, counselling and enrichment programs.
3. Encourage sensitivity to the needs of families and the impact of church programs upon them in terms of expenditure of time, energy, money and other family resources.
4. Provide for the availability of premarital guidance to couples preparing for marriage.
5. Cooperate with the conference/mission Family Ministries Department to implement the various programs promoted by the department.
6. Cooperate with church leadership in designing, planning, and implementing additional family life features and programs as needed for both membership nurture and evangelistic outreach. The Family Ministries Department suggests the following additional emphasis as a minimum:
 - Premarital guidance - available to all couples before their wedding
 - Strengthening marriage - one program per year
 - Parent education - one program every two years, or preferably, programs for parenting young children and parenting teens offered on alternating years
 - Family worship - one program per year
 - Family finance - one program every two years

Resources are available from the Family Ministries Department for each of these areas of emphasis and may be ordered through the local conference or mission office.

7. Foster a climate of warmth and closeness, engendering a sense of "familyness" in the congregation and a redemptive spirit toward families in need of support and encouragement.

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MAJOR TASKS OF THE FAMILY MINISTRIES LEADER

1. CHAIRS THE FAMILY MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

It is recommended that even in the smallest congregations a committee be selected for family ministries instead of following the tradition of making it a one-person assignment. Family ministry is about relationships and helping people learn to be Christlike in their relationships. This needs to be modelled in a group setting because it is "caught as much as it is taught." Even if the committee only meets once a quarter, and includes people who hold other offices in the church, it should become a support group as well as a working unit. As chairperson it is the responsibility of the family ministries leader to not only put together an agenda and moderate the discussions, but to facilitate times of personal sharing, prayer and learning.

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2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Family Ministries leader works with the pastor and Family Ministries Committee to survey the needs of families in and around the church. This includes determining the profile of the church: couples, single persons, single parents, children, teens, young adults, mature adults, etc; and finding which topics are of interest to them. Needs assessment tools such as survey questionnaires and analysis worksheets are available from your local conference Family Ministries department. If you would like assistance, your conference may be able to provide a consultant.

Developing a Family Profile of Your Congregation What kinds of families comprise your church? You may have a general impression based on Sabbath morning observation. But such general impressions should be sharpened by more accurate research. How can you find out more about your church?

A family survey distributed to the members of your congregation can be a good place to start. If this is distributed in church and filled out on the spot it should give you a fairly accurate picture of the composition of your active membership. However, it is also valuable to have your church clerk compile data, since this can include members who may not be present on Sabbath. You may find, for example, that many of your college students or young families with small children do not attend church. This can help you discover unmet needs in the church.

Finding and studying community demographic research will give you a profile of the larger community around you.

Finding and studying community demographic research will give you a profile of the larger community around you. This can tell you about the families in the community and can give you information about age categories, number of singles and marrieds, number of divorced people, education level, income level, and various changes in your community. Your local public library, Chamber of Commerce, social service agency or hospital may have this type of information available.

Once you have compiled this church and community information, look for patterns. Are there any significant groups missing from your church life? This may suggest whole areas of need that the church has not addressed. Are there significant differences between the community profile and that of your church? If so, why? Are there large clusters in any particular group, such as senior citizens, singles or young parents? These may be groups needing special attention.

Using Direct Feedback to Pinpoint Needs Family surveys can suggest areas of need in your church. But it cannot tell you what people feel they need. Learn more about specific concerns by talking with people in at least three groups:

Experts Talk to counsellors, social workers, physicians, teachers and other

professionals in your community. What sorts of problems are they discovering in their work? What do they see as the greatest needs in the community? What kinds of programs would they like to see a church offer? You may get more than just good ideas from doing this - you might get a volunteer to lead a program!

Church Families Take some time during Sabbath School to interview class members. Talk to people at a church social. Brainstorm during a church business session. Have volunteers make phone calls. Ask people about felt needs in the area of family life. Mention specific programs and ideas and ask for their feedback. Inquire about concerns in their own home and family.

Your Family Life Committee Ask your committee members the same questions you are asking in the surveys. What ideas can you generate?

Using the Church Family Interest Survey to Highlight Needs A Church Family Interest Survey can help highlight felt needs in your congregation. You may also want to contact as many inactive church members as possible. Your indication of interest in their opinions might start a process of bringing them back into the church. They might respond to the church if it started meeting their needs.

Identifying Target Audiences Research will help clarify needs in the congregation and community. Your family ministry programs should grow out of those identified needs and should be aimed at a clearly delineated group of people who have common needs, interests and experiences - a target audience.

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3. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The family ministries leader works in cooperation with other church leaders to implement family life programs. This involves planning, promotion, recruitment and training of volunteers, delivery of the programs and evaluation. Although a number of very detailed and "user-friendly" program helps are available, successful programs still require considerable attention to detail, good organization and strong communication for many weeks in advance.

Activities and Events

There are many family life activities which can be implemented in your church, including special Sabbaths, panel discussions, presentations by guest speakers, seminars, weekend retreats, films that enhance interpersonal relationships, support groups for specialized needs (such as the aged, boys without fathers, or single parents) and programs in Sabbath School, midweek meetings, Home and School Association and Youth meetings.

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Premarriage education is an area of particular concern to the Family Ministries leader. No wedding should be conducted unless adequate premarital sessions have been provided to the couple. This can be done in a group setting, or in private counselling, by the pastor himself or qualified lay persons. 'Beginnings', by Dr Bryan Craig, is a resource specifically designed for assisting in preparing couples for marriage, and is available from your Conference Family Ministries Director.

A range of resources by Christian authors on topics that focus on family life are

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available through major Christian book shops, including the ABC, Koorong, and WORD. Books, magazines, CD's and DVD's feature topics such as pre-marriage, marriage, parenting, children, teens, youth, singles, and issues for the aged.

Key Christian authors include David and Claudia Arp, Scott Stanley, John Gottman, Harville Hendrix, Arch Hart and Sharon Morris-May, who all deal with marriage enrichment. Authors who focus on parenting include Steve Biddulph, William Doherty and John Kelly. On issues of sexuality, see the books by David Schnarch, James Dobson, and Cliff and Joyce Penner.

'A New Design for Family Ministry' by Dennis B Guernsey is a book that suggests an integrated approach to family relational and spiritual growth.

For a more extensive list of books and other resources on a wide range of family issues, contact your Family Ministries director at your conference/mission.

Leadership Development

Because the role of family ministries leader is new to many, you may need to learn basic principles and techniques to carry out this ministry effectively. Among other things, family ministry requires leaders that are adaptable and knowledgeable about interpersonal relationships. Leadership development opportunities available to you include the following:

Pastors in your area who have developed special expertise in behavioural sciences may be available as consultants.

Your conference Family Ministries Department may provide leadership development seminars for family ministries leaders each year.

Griggs University, formerly known as Home Study International, the correspondence school sponsored by the General Conference, offers courses about family life, including courses with college credit. For more information go to www.griggs.edu or contact them at:

Griggs University/Griggs International Academy
PO Box 4437
Silver Spring, MD 20914-4437 USA

Courses in family relations may also be available through private colleges and TAFE centres. Check out what is available in your area.

It is the responsibility of the Family Ministries leader to help the board keep in view the relational needs of the members of the church and make families a real priority in the life of the church.

4. FAMILY ADVOCATE

The Family Ministries leader sits on the church board and should represent the needs and concerns of family life. It is easy for a board to become involved in the organisational and financial issues of the church and forget that congregations are essentially clusters of households - people trying to live out their faith together. It is the responsibility of the Family Ministries leader to help the board keep in view the relational needs of the members of the church and make families a real priority in the life of the church.

5. INFORMATION SOURCE

The Family Ministries leader will be a primary source of information about ministering to the needs of families. Leaders should be encouraged to compile a

list of Christian counsellors and therapists to whom they can feel confident making referrals, and keep handy the resource guide of recommended books published by the Family Ministries Department.

Leaders will need to guard against getting too involved or “playing psychologist” when ministering families, but highly developed listening skills will make it easy for other church members to share their concerns and needs and ask for support and information.

Planning an Effective Family Ministries Program in the Church and the Community

Adequate planning is at the heart of any successful Family Ministries program. The Family Ministries leader along with the Family Ministries committee need to carefully develop their ideas and plans so that the content, style and “packaging” of their program achieves the goals that have been clearly established. The following planning process model outlines a simple approach that will assist Family Ministries personnel in their program planning and development

Adequate planning is at the heart of any successful Family Ministries program.



To be effective, the content of any program must clearly and successfully address the needs expressed by your target audience. But the planning and “packaging” of the program is also vital. Here are some basic items you will need to consider.

Successful programs speak to peoples’ needs. Where are people in the congregation and the community feeling their greatest need right now?

FOCUSING ON NEEDS AND TARGET GROUPS

Successful programs speak to peoples’ needs. Where are people in the congregation and the community feeling their greatest need right now? How many are interested in parenting skills? In grief recovery? In divorce recovery? In improving their marriages? In coping with single life? In strengthening family worship? In friendship and recreation with other Christian families? What kinds of activities would be helpful to them? What are they willing to invest in time, money and personal involvement?

Statistical Data One way to define needs is to simply assemble the statistical data already available. Use a tool such as the Church Family Profile to construct a family profile of your congregation. The Census data on file at the public library will quickly give you similar information about families in the local community (the number of

teenagers, married couples, single parents, divorced persons, widowed persons etc).

Felt Needs Statistical data cannot, of course, indicate the degree of interest or the felt needs of these people. A survey will help to uncover the felt needs of both congregation and community. A simple questionnaire such as the Church Family Interest Survey (available from your Conference/Mission Family Ministries leader) can be distributed to active members during the worship service. Inactive church members can be interviewed by telephone or personal visits. The Community Family Education Survey can be used for surveying the general public by telephone or doorstep visits.

More specific information about the kinds of activities, topics, publicity and locations that will draw people can be obtained by setting up one or more small group discussions with potential program participants.

For example, in one church statistical data indicated that 22 families in the congregation and 413 in its ministry area had children under six years of age. A survey discovered that 65 per cent of these people had an interest in attending parent education classes. To get more specific information, a discussion group made up of two couples and two single parents with preschool children was formed (one couple and one single parent were church members; the others were not). Another church member led the discussion, using a detailed list of questions compiled by the program development committee. This method not only helps gather information, it also builds interest in the program under discussion.

When a specific target group and their needs have been defined, the family ministries committee should begin to plan their program by setting specific goals that will meet the needs identified. The committee may then wish to set about designing the proposed program or establish a small planning committee with a program coordinator as chairperson. The program coordinator and his/her team, will then design the program, curriculum resources, written objectives, a budget and a suggested starting date. In smaller churches, this planning committee may be the Family Ministry Committee itself. In larger settings, it is recommended that specialized planning committees for different events be set up to develop specific events.

STATED OBJECTIVES

No plan is complete unless it includes a simple, specific description of expected results. For example: What is the desired effect on those who will attend? List expectations clearly to help the working team, the church board and any others involved to understand clearly what the activity seeks to achieve. In writing an objective:

1. Make it specific, not general
2. Make it something that can be accomplished
3. Make it measurable.

PRELIMINARY PLANNING

Meeting Place In settings where the Adventist church is perceived positively, a meeting at the church itself may be best, but sometimes the program will fare better at a "neutral" facility (such as a YMCA or some other public facility).

"Others may
change us, but life
begins and ends
with family."
Anon

Time of Year Every community has its favourable seasons and unfavourable times of the year. In the latter, low attendance is guaranteed. For example, one church offered a health screening event on the weekend that the football season came to its climax. Few people came. The same program, with the same advertising, and in the same location during another time attracted ten times as many people.

When to Meet and How Often Although single, intensive events (held on one day or one weekend) should seem to make it easier for more people to be present, educational research indicates that for a program to have significant impact (especially in changing habits or attitudes) a number of sessions over several weeks is necessary. A smaller, well-planned initial program can lead to other, and perhaps larger, events. If a “beginners group” is rewarding, people may be willing to take on a more extended commitment. A young mothers’ group might work best on a weekday at mid-morning. A teen-parent communication seminar might work well on Saturday afternoons. A couples’ group might need to be over by 8.30pm, while a singles’ group might flourish by starting about 8.00pm.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

Experience with group dynamics indicates that an ongoing class or seminar can expect to sustain a maximum of about forty people. If a church expects to involve more than this number of participants in a particular family ministry, it should seriously consider designing a program with several groups, perhaps meeting on different nights or in different locations.

LOGISTICS

There are many things that can be done to make a program attractive and lend sophistication. Refreshments, a notebook or notepad, pencils, audio-visuals, handouts, name tags etc., are just a few possibilities. Arrange for participants to have an opportunity to mix and get acquainted. Make sure printed materials identify the sponsoring organization and the program leaders so that recipients of advertising and materials can keep in contact.

Young couples, parents, and especially single parents, may be more inclined to attend a class if child-care is provided. Be careful how you word announcements about child-care, however, and ensure you follow all current federal, state, local council, and local church guidelines for child-care procedures. Where applicable, church volunteers can be recruited to help with child-care. Teenagers and grandparents may also be able to help. You might also want to consider including non-member friends from the community.

Program Resources Fortunately family ministries are within the reach of every Adventist church, no matter how small, because a vast number of curriculum resources have been published in recent years. Most have detailed guides for the group leader, textbooks, or other materials for the participants. (See the Family Ministries Department for a list of resources). Also, there are many resources not published by the SDA church that might be appropriate. Consider all your options! If supplies must be ordered, do so well in advance and in sufficient quantity to care for the anticipated enrolment

Program Coordinator The coordinator for the program need not be an expert in the area. However, it is essential that this person have the ability to organize and carry through on projects, and have the trust of the target audience and the church

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“Marriage is the foundation of the family. The family, in turn, is the bedrock of society and the church. Both marriage and family are necessary for the common good of society. When either weakens, all of us suffer the consequences. When both marriage and family grow stronger, all of us benefit.”

Chaput

board. The program coordinator need not be one of the target group, but he/she must be able to communicate with people in the target group. He or she should be an individual with a clear commitment to the church and to Christ. In addition, the leader should be willing to see the specific ministry as a long-term activity and an opportunity to learn new skills and be exposed to new ideas. The time it takes to secure the right leadership will eventually pay off in a program with a deep spiritual dimension.

Supportive Team The program coordinator will need a supportive team of volunteers to care for several specific aspects of the target ministry:

1. Dealing with paperwork, purchasing, setting up equipment, making phone calls, distributing advertising etc.
2. Chatting with people as they gather at the events, getting to know them personally, answering questions, listening, setting up personal visits in the home, etc.
3. Soliciting intercessory prayer from the church family on behalf of the venture.

In addition, it is important to have the pastor or a local elder as part of the team to serve as an administrative counsellor and a channel of communication between the Family Ministry Committee and the church board. The entire team should meet periodically (monthly, quarterly, or as needed) for prayer, evaluation, brainstorming, planning, sharing and caring for one another. The quality of relationships within this team will determine, to a large degree, the success of the program.

Time Frame and Budget After decisions have been made about the foregoing items, the planning committee can then come up with a budget and time frame for the program. The time frame should provide specific deadlines for maintaining accountability. A realistic budget will keep spending within reason. Once the budget is outlined, you will be able to calculate a registration fee. If the initial calculation produces a fee that is too high for your target group, the church board may want to discuss the possibility of providing a subsidy for the program.

Fees It is permissible to charge a registration fee. In fact, it may even be a good idea. Studies have shown that people tend to value things they pay for - even if it is only a small amount. The public may perceive a free program as having some kind of “pay-off” or ulterior motive and may justifiably be unwilling to get involved. When family ministry programs with a modest registration fee (or charge for materials) are offered to the public, it enhances the public image of the program and lends legitimacy. Surprisingly, charging a fee might even increase enrolment. Having said that, however, free programs may be more effective in small towns where the Adventist church is well-known or in low-income, inner-city neighbourhoods. Go with what works best in your area!

ADVERTISING

After the church board has voted approval, the working team should begin to communicate with the target audience.

The available mediums of communication can be divided into three major categories:

1. Relational media [which feature person-to-person contact]
2. Formal media [such as direct mail]
3. Public media [such as newspapers and broadcasting facilities].

The level of education, lifestyle and residential area of the target audience should be taken into account when designing the advertising campaign for a particular family ministry program.

Relational media are simply organized ways of using “word-of-mouth.” The simplest is inviting the congregation to share information about the upcoming program with friends, neighbours and work associates. Other ways to use this kind of relational advertising are contacting people by telephone, going door-to-door to distribute information in housing developments with high concentrations of the target group, and arranging to make in-person announcements at community meetings of various kinds (civic clubs, Home & School meetings, etc.). Relational media will be much more effective if paired with an attractive brochure to reinforce the word-of-mouth communication. Relational media costs little in terms of money, but much in volunteer hours.

Formal media which rely on mailings, are probably the most cost effective forms of advertising available to local churches. Of these, mass mailings - addressed to “Resident” and done by a mail advertising company - are more costly and less fruitful than other types. However, mass mailing can be useful in starting public ministries in a community where the church has not developed much contact or when the target audience has been unreached or is hard to identify. Since a response of only about one per cent can be expected, large and costly mailings are necessary to get results.

Direct mail differs from mass mailing in that it is sent to specific addresses by name. These names may be obtained from an advertising agency according to specification (they will match your target audience), or from the church’s own list of contacts and interests.

The Adventist Media Centre can supply the names and addresses of people in specified zip code areas who have requested booklets on family subjects.

Public media are the most expensive forms of communication and the most difficult to utilize. Public advertising can be a complex undertaking for the novice. Furthermore, few advertising professionals understand the unique factors involved in church-related events.

Before spending large sums to purchase space for ads in a newspaper or time for announcements on a radio station, seek professional counsel. Here are some possibilities for getting this assistance. Contact a public relations firm and see if they might be willing to volunteer some advice to church groups involved in humanitarian service. If you know of an Adventist public relations professional, see if that person would be willing to assist the church in developing creative advertising for public media.

All communication experts agree that there is no one best method of advertising. Successful advertising always uses a mix of several media.

Public relations does not end when the first public program has been held. Utilize continuing, supportive advertising and other communication tools to keep people coming back. Use a telephone committee to remind participants of each session in an ongoing class. Send regular mailings to encourage those who responded to the initial advertising to continue attending, reiterating the topics and benefits available at each session. Remember to plan later advertising just as carefully as you did the initial advertising - giving consideration to the target audience and local conditions.

Successful advertising always uses a mix of several media.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS - THE MOST IMPORTANT DIMENSION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

If a family program is going to be a family ministry, then team members must develop listening and other relational skills to work with people at the level of their spiritual needs. In order to effectively minister to people, one must get beyond superficial, friendly contacts and hear people's deep, inner concerns. Only at this intimate level can spiritual needs be identified and met. Reaching people in this inner, spiritual sphere of their lives adds a vital experiential dimension to the intellectual content of a family ministry program. A variety of training programs, as well as books and other resources, are available which offer training in relational skills.

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CREATING PATHWAYS INTO CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

The church should open clear pathways for those who wish to move from attendance at family ministry programs into closer fellowship with the congregation.

Keying in on Life Events Unchurched people are often motivated to make their first visit to a church by such occurrences as a divorce, the birth of a child, a change of residence, marriage or other similar life event. Genuine caring in family outreach touches many unchurched people who are experiencing such life events, and the interest of some of these people will be aroused to visit the church that has demonstrated its concern for their needs. Sensitive members of the outreach team will hear these spiritual needs being expressed and will be able to refer people to appropriate religious activities within the church which will be of interest to them.

Support groups Small Bible study and support groups are one of the most effective pathways to church fellowship for unchurched people. A congregation that has a singles group, a parent-exchange group, a couples' group, a women's group and so forth, has potential to grow simply because it has "doors" through which new people can find entrance into its social fabric.

Individuals who do not feel comfortable in groups but respond well in one-to-one contact, may be introduced to congregational members who are gifted in relating this way. It would be helpful for members who are involved in this type of follow-up to have some orientation to the family outreach activities with which the newcomers have been involved.

Small Bible study and support groups are one of the most effective pathways to church fellowship for unchurched people

Family-oriented worship services A congregation can enhance the interest on the part of unchurched participants to visit their worship services by having periodic special events during Sabbath worship. A Mother's Day event is always popular. A Singles Weekend might be another program to address the needs and interests of that special group. The church could invite a qualified guest speaker for the worship hour and then conduct a two or three-hour seminar after lunch. By mailing/emailing an appropriate invitation to all previous participants in family ministry outreach efforts and putting a telephone committee to work, the church can assure a good number of visitors on special Sabbaths.

Family-related topics in evangelistic meetings The same principle can be applied to public evangelistic meetings. If some sessions are devoted to family-related topics, and the church invites prior family outreach participants, some of these people are sure to attend. If the program relates Bible teaching to family needs, chances improve that these people will return to hear other presentations.

Cultivating Interests Unfortunately, churches may effectively screen out people they do not want as part of their fellowship. Unchurched people who visit a church because of its family outreach are likely to make only one visit, unless the congregation has made specific preparations to nurture their interest.

Is your church “user friendly” to the target audience? For example, if your church is offering a parent education class to the public, can visiting parents easily find the church’s children’s ministries wing or area? Is the congregation accepting of noisy, untrained preschoolers? If the church is conducting a singles’ ministry, do single adults who visit find only couple-oriented announcements in the bulletin?

The ministry of hospitality as exercised by the greeters, ushers and other lay leaders helps determine whether or not first-time visitors come a second time.

Other key considerations include these: Is the building accessible? Are the people warm and open? Is there a comfortable visitors’ Sabbath school class for the first-time attendee? Do parents find an attractive, interesting children’s program in Sabbath school?

Are people invited to dinner, either to a home or at the church? The church board should carefully think about what kind of first impression a visitor might form from a visit to their church. This might be a difficult and perhaps even sobering discussion. Is the church in good repair, or does it show signs of neglect? Are the grounds neat and attractive? Is there adequate parking? In general, is the congregation friendly? If the answers to any of these is no, a plan should be formulated to remedy any areas that are less than ideal. Remember, a first impression may be the last impression, so do all you can to make it a good one!

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Integrating Family Ministries Into the Life of the Church

A successful family ministry program can't be built on special events and programs alone. It must be a comprehensive approach to ministry that is integrated into the entire life of the church. Appropriate resources must be developed, family life must be made visible, opportunities must be provided for growth and nurture of family life, and specific needs must be addressed. Here are some suggestions for making family ministry a more significant part of your church life.

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INCLUSION

The people you include in the visible life of the church make a statement about church priorities. Do you include people from all sectors of church family life in your Sabbath School and worship service? Do you include family members participating together in various aspects of church life? Consider some of the following possibilities:

- Have couples or families lead in various aspects of worship such as reading of Scripture, leading music, offering prayer etc.
- Utilize people of various ages and life situations in the worship and Sabbath School programs. Give some high school-age youth a chance to read the Scripture. Have a single person lead the congregation in prayer. Give a senior citizen an opportunity to present a special feature. Do a short interview with a divorced person or a single parent, giving them a chance to share how the Lord has led and how other congregational members have been helpful in their special situation. Give children's groups a chance to be involved in the worship service apart from the regular children's story.
- Help make your worship service family-oriented by making it child-friendly. Include a children's story in the service. Plan a once-a-month children's church. Explore new options in child-care in addition to a traditional "mother's room." This might mean a rotating group of people who would care for toddlers during worship so that their parents can be involved in the service without the distraction of children. Use stories and illustrations in sermons that can be understood and appreciated by children.
- Pastors, Sabbath School speakers and teachers should strive to be inclusive in the illustrations they use. Do all your illustrations or points presuppose that your members are married in traditional families, or do they include the wide range of people and family situations in your church? Do you always address people as isolated individuals, or do you take into account the relational context of their lives? If you plan a worship service around one set of needs, do you focus on that group alone or do you make an effort to build bridges to other groups as well? (For example, if you have a marriage commitment Sabbath, do you make any efforts to offer ideas that would be useful to singles as they form relationships also?) Do you ignore groups in the church with special needs (blended families, divorced people, single parents, couples in midlife, widows and widowers etc.), or do you strive to include them in the content of your presentations?

SPECIAL FAMILY EMPHASIS DAYS

Special worship services and family life days can do much to strengthen family life in your church. Here are some general principles for planning and an example of one possible special-emphasis day.

PRINCIPLES OF PLANNING

1. Designate a small planning group with adequate representation from the group being spotlighted. A church staff member, representatives from the Family Ministries committee, and those with a special interest in the topic may participate in the planning.
2. Develop a clear, overall theme. Is your focus on singles? Senior adults? Parents with children? Married couples? Youth? Determine which segment of church family life you wish to spotlight. Then develop a specific theme relating to this group. A day focusing on single adults, for example, might emphasize community building - both how the congregation can build singles into the community life of the church and how singles can build community in their own lives.
3. Make a list of activities that could focus on this emphasis. While the worship service itself might be a major event, a special potluck, a Sabbath school program, an afternoon seminar, or a vesper program could be an additional avenue to extend the impact of the special emphasis day.
4. Become acquainted with appropriate resources. (Contact your conference/mission Family Ministries director).
5. Create a worship service with a unified theme. Use responsive readings, a children's story, an interview or special feature, music, and sermon in a unified whole to emphasize the theme. Invite people from the spotlighted family group to be participants. If possible, plan for a specified type of commitment or response.

The following are given as examples of a special emphasis day. It is important to offer balance in your selection of special emphasis days. If you celebrate marriage, for example, you should also plan an event to celebrate the contribution of singles in the church in your church year.

Marriage Celebration Sabbath Celebrate the joys of Christian marriage and lead couples to a recommitment of their marriage vows. It is also designed to create a positive view of marriage for young people and those who are considering marriage. Always make your service inclusive! It should be meaningful to more than just the target group.

Try a 'Singles Day' Interview some single people and let them share their unique joys and concerns. A sermon could address the possibilities open to singles in the work of God's kingdom, the contribution of singles to the life of the church, or the needs of singles and the way the church could become more aware and more inclusive. The Adventist Singles Network organization is willing to help with these events. Your local conference Family Ministries department can put you in touch with this group.

Mother's Day and Father's Day These days offer a number of possibilities and can be great opportunities to honour mothers and fathers in the church. But you can be creative and do some innovative things as well. How about a sermon on the

Special worship services and family life days can do much to strengthen family life in your church

"The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom."

Henry Ward Beecher

The work of both mothers and fathers is a reflection of God's love to us.

fatherhood or motherhood of God? The first one might be easy. But you might enjoy looking up all the texts about God that demonstrate His motherly qualities also. The work of both mothers and fathers is a reflection of God's love to us. These days can also focus on the challenges of being a mother or father in today's world, the challenges of sharing parenting more equally, or even the decision to parent or not to parent.

Worldwide Family Day You might focus on the human family across the world with its various needs and our responsibilities for one another. You may want to explore the ways in which the church can mother and father the needy children of the world. Or it could focus on the Adventist family worldwide and how each one of us, whether married or single, parent or child, is part of that family.

FAMILY LIFE RESOURCE CENTRE

In addition to offering special programs, your church should develop a resource base that can meet the needs of families within the congregation on an on-going basis. Here are some ideas for resource development:

- Develop a family life lending library which includes books, periodicals, CD's and DVD's. You may wish to subscribe to magazines with a family emphasis and keep these in the church library.
- Collect and make available materials from Family Ministries such as "Focus on the Family." Many of these ministries have materials that they make available to churches at no cost. Ask to have your church put on the mailing list.
- Select a specific family life resource such as a book or CD/DVD for special emphasis. It can be promoted in the church newsletter or from the pulpit.
- Create bulletin board displays highlighting family life resources. This can let people know what's available.
- A regular family life feature in the church newsletter can allow you to cover a wide range of topics and meet a diversity of needs.
- Include newsletter features that emphasize activities of actual families in your church to model positive family life.
- Collect and share website addresses of organisations that feature family ministries materials, including CD's and DVDs on various family issues.

Make sure your church program offers opportunities for families to do things together!

FAMILY LIFE IN THE SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

Often churches give lip service to the importance of the family and then structure the church program to fragment families, keep them busy, and keep them apart. Make sure your church program offers opportunities for families to do things together! Churches can provide positive alternatives through social and recreational activities that involve families. Here are some ideas for social and recreational family ministry.

- Church camps or family camps can provide a positive opportunity for families to enjoy each other and get to know the church family better.
- A family recreation night is good for both the relationships and the physical health of family members. In some communities a gym or squash centre can be rented one Saturday night a month. Some churches have a constituent church school with a gym which can be used. Check with the local council in

your area for information about the availability of recreational facilities.

- Church socials should be designed for families. Some special-interest social and recreational events may focus on specific sub-groups, but socials promoted for the entire church should make provision for children and youth.

BUILDING A REFERRAL NETWORK

What do you do when families need help? Where can you send a family whose teenager has just been caught using cocaine? Where can you turn for help when a church member expresses thoughts of suicide? Who can you call when a sobbing woman phones and explains that her husband has been beating her again? Who can help when that attractive couple who have been such great leaders in the junior division tell you they are seriously considering divorce? Where can you refer the victim of sexual assault? Who should you call if you find out that a child has been molested? If you don't have a good referral network, you may be overwhelmed when confronted with these types of problems.

A referral network is a list of resource people in a variety of helping professions with specialized areas of expertise. It can include psychologists; marriage, family and child counsellors; social workers; physicians; and managers of local shelters for abused women and children. It can also include crisis hotlines, social service agencies, community mental health centres and other such services. Where do you get the names for such individuals and organisations? And how do you know which ones to trust?

Once again, take advantage of the work others have already done. Check with your local council social worker. Many local councils regularly update a list of all resources available in the district. Even if you or your pastor do not have a large list somebody in the group who has been in the community for a long time is bound to know where to start in compiling one.

Where do you find reliable mental health professionals for your referral list? You may wish to ask various churches if they know of Christian counsellors in the community who are both competent and spiritually sound. If there are no Adventist professionals in the community, it is important to find counsellors who are sensitive to our religious beliefs and understanding. The networking you have done in order to develop your seminar resource list can be very valuable here also. Many of the mental health professionals in your community give occasional public lectures. Go and listen! You can pick up a lot about a person from listening to a public presentation.

Don't overlook the value of personal experience and word of mouth. Talk to people who have had experience with different counsellors. Nowadays more and more people are willing to openly talk about experiences in therapy and many can give you a perceptive evaluation of a specific therapist's strengths and weaknesses.

FAMILY LIFE IN SPECIAL SERVICES OF THE CHURCH

Comprehensive family ministry integrates family concerns into the entire life of the church rather than reserving it for special programs alone. Many church life events can be family events! Consider some of the following special events and ways in which they can become family ministry:

A referral network is a list of people in a variety of helping professions with specialised areas of expertise..

Comprehensive family ministry integrates family concerns into the entire life of the church rather than reserving it for special programs alone

Baptism

- Include the family in the service itself. A song or a scripture reading can be given by a family member in honour of the event. Invite the extended family to attend the worship service and invite them to stand during the baptism.

Communion

- Many churches have family footwashing which gives family members the opportunity to celebrate family love along with the servanthood of Jesus.
- Plan a way to involve children in the communion service. A children's story during the footwashing and special illustrations for children during the service itself help them feel included even if they are not yet ready to partake of the emblems.
- Have a Jewish Passover meal for a Friday night communion. This is full of rich symbolism that families can appreciate.

"Children need love, especially when they don't desire it."

Anon

Child Dedication

- Include the whole family in the service. Invite the whole family to the front and give opportunities for the family to express their spiritual commitment.
- Give some form of tangible reminder of the service that the child can someday appreciate. This might be a recording of the service or a special message written to the child that can be opened when the child is old enough.

Family life concerns can also be incorporated into such services as weddings, funerals, evangelistic meetings, Vacation Bible Schools, Pathfinders, and other such programs of the church. The key to this is thoughtful consideration of how to include family members, how to address the needs of the families, and how to make it possible for families to attend such events together.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND MINISTRY IDEAS

There are a number of special needs and topics that lend themselves to family ministry. This section gives a brief overview of a number of different possibilities.

Preparation for Marriage In a smaller church pastors usually do premarital counselling individually. In a larger church it may be helpful to have a preparation for marriage class. The most common format consists of six once-a-week classes covering such topics as marital communication, family finances, sexuality, dealing with conflict, parenting, household management, male and female roles, etc. A class of this type may be team-taught with a number of different experts volunteering their time. Notices can be placed throughout the community, and non-members as well as members can participate.

Personality The study of personality types and their implications for marriage, family, career and the spiritual life is an ever popular subject for church family life seminars. The Myers-Briggs typology, based on a concept of Carl Jung and popularized in the book 'Please Understand Me', is an example of this type of personality study.

Personality and temperament inventories are available as well as resources dealing with love and marriage, parenting, and careers.

Support Groups for Parents Parents who face unique challenges are often very interested in finding a support group of others who have experienced the same or

similar problems. Families with a schizophrenic member, parents who have lost a child, parents who have a son or daughter in a homosexual lifestyle, parents with a child who is drug addicted, parents of a handicapped or autistic child, or parents with a missing child could benefit from such a group.

Divorce Recovery With the rising divorce rate, many church members are attempting to come to grips with the tragic reality of marital break-up in their lives. Divorce recovery programs can deal with a variety of issues such as dealing with anger and blame, stages of grief, how to manage being suddenly single, issues regarding children and custody, legal issues of divorce, stages of divorce recovery, finding a support network, dealing with relatives and in-laws, theological issues and divorce, learning to love again and learning from the divorce.

Blended Families A remarriage following divorce or widowhood often produces a blended family - a new family of parents and children that includes members from two previous families. Blended families face unique challenges. How do children learn to share a parent that was once their own? How do parents learn to love new children and relate fairly to both sets of children? How can rivalry be handled? What do you do when the children are driving a wedge between parents?

Chemical Dependency and Adult Children of Alcoholics The Adventist emphasis on health and temperance puts us in a prime position to address issues of addiction. Some of the significant new concepts include an understanding of the addictive patterns on the next generation. Many churches have Adult Children of Alcoholic groups or Alcoholics Anonymous or other such 12-step groups in church facilities.

Grief Recovery Families who have lost a loved one need support. A grief recovery program can help people understand grief and loss, provide group support during the grieving process, and learn to adjust to life after loss.

Finances Financial pressures are one of the most significant forces causing marital conflict. A seminar on Christian principles of finance can be a real asset to building strong families. Budgeting, planning, investing and principles of Christian stewardship can be covered.

Preparation for Parenthood While childbirth classes are usually offered through hospitals, some churches have offered them with good success. Classes can also cover infant care and emotional preparation for the new baby.

Siblings and Your New Baby A "sibling class" is popular with parents who are expecting a second or subsequent child. This is designed to explain the birth of the new baby to older siblings, to help diminish rivalry, and to emotionally prepare the older siblings for the family changes that will come.

How to Live With a Toddler Toddlers offer unique challenges to parents. A class focusing on the developmental tasks of toddlers and the needed parenting drills will make this time easier and help parents understand the baffling little person in their home.

How to Communicate With Children Parent-child communication is one of the key elements of successful parenting. A seminar on how to communicate with children can help parents develop this skill.

The Challenges of Adolescence A class for parents of teens can focus on a number of issues. Once again, communication is important. Other topics such as

sexuality, peer relationships, changing aspects of discipline, drug abuse prevention, personal values, entertainment, goal setting, and career planning are also valuable topics.

Positive Relationships for Singles A seminar for singles can focus on topics such as building a support network, creating a sense of family when you're single, dynamics of love and romance, singles and sex, and living alone.

Discipline A class that focuses specifically on discipline can cover effective strategies for each age group. Evaluation of various methods can be included and clarification can be offered about when different ones should be used.

Teens and Sex One of the pressing questions teens face is "why wait?" Do the teens in your church have good reasons clearly in mind? Do they have straight-forward information on sexuality that will help them understand and cope with all the new feelings they are experiencing? A seminar such as the "Compleat Courtship" by the Van Pelts or Josh McDowell's "Why Wait" DVD can help.

Enriching Your Marriage This is one of the key areas of Family Ministry that can have a significant impact on the life and health of the church. Marriage Enrichment programs offer effective and meaningful ways of building marital relationships. Areas of focus might include communication, building intimacy and managing conflict.

Sexuality in Marriage With over half of all married couples experiencing sexual problems in marriage, a seminar on this subject could be most valuable. General information on sexual physiology, sexuality and emotions, the influence of the past on present sexual attitudes, sexual communication and sexual technique can be supplemented with information on dealing with specific sexual problems. In a seminar of this type it is especially important to have the right leader.

The Challenges of Midlife This stage of life is sometimes characterised by crisis, but it can also be a time of growth and opportunity. A seminar looking at the challenges facing individuals at this time could focus on such things as the "empty nest" syndrome, the male at midlife, dealing with the gap between one's actual achievements and one's aspirations, and changing careers.

Preparing for Retirement Retirement is both a welcome change of pace and a new stress point for older people. Some important topics that could be covered include understanding changes in the marriage with both partners at home, learning to plan leisure time, finding avenues of service, dealing with the physiological changes that aging brings, developing a new life and new goals, financial planning for retirees (including information on Social Security and Medicare), and enriching spirituality in the golden years.

The AIDS Crisis While many church members have the attitude "it could never happen to me," there is no doubt that AIDS will touch virtually every church in the next few years. Even those who are not a high risk group need to understand the epidemic and its impact on society and those around them.

The Pathological Relationship Many people find themselves trapped in destructive, addictive relationships. Groups are springing up all over (some based on Robin Norwood's book "Women Who Love Too Much") helping people caught in such relationships to find emotional freedom, a sense of self, and the courage to make changes. A group or information seminar can cover subjects such as overcoming excessive dependence, developing assertiveness and recognizing a dead-end romance.

Improving Your Self-Esteem (or Your Child's Self-Esteem) Self-esteem issues have a major impact on the behaviour of both children and adults. Self-esteem must be built on a solid spiritual foundation, and the development and recognition of healthy competence.

Worship and the Spiritual Life In the Family Many families wish they could develop positive family worship and a context of spiritual growth within their families. A seminar on how to conduct family worship, how to develop meaningful personal devotions, and how to develop spiritual leadership in the family would help meet the needs of families.

Moral and Faith Development in Your Family In the past few years a great deal of research has been done on moral and faith development. Both follow predictable stages and can be enhanced or inhibited. Parents need to understand the stages, the transitions, and ways they can enhance the development of their children.

Television and Media in Family Life What influence does television have on people (especially children?) How can families learn to control it? How valuable is educational TV? How do moral values shown on TV and in movies affect children? How can we learn to be discriminating in the choice of entertainment? How do we deal with the internet and mobile phone usage? These are all key questions facing families.

Family Ministry Program Ideas

TRANSITIONS	SUGGESTED GROUPS OR PROGRAMS
Adolescence	Relationship Issues, Friendship, Personality, Cross-Cultural Issues, Building Self-Esteem
Engagement	Premarital Awareness - Expectations/Roles Family Histories Communication & Conflict Resolution Skills
Marriage	Couples Communication Skills, Conflict Resolution Skills, Marital Enrichment, Budgeting
Considering Parenthood	Preparing for Parenthood
Families With Young Children	Parent Effectiveness/Discipling Parent-Child Communication Dual Career Families How to Talk to Your Children About Sex
Families With Adolescents	How to Raise an Adolescent and Survive Assertiveness Training
Last Child Leaving Home	Mid-Life Crisis Management, Empty-Nest Adjustment, Career Planning for Women
Retirement	Retirement Planning
Death of a Spouse	Death & Dying Education
Divorce	Divorce and Separation, Parenting, Children of Divorce
Single Parenthood	Raising Children Alone, Financial Management
Remarriage	Living in a Step-Family

Adapted from Janice Prochaska and Beth Fallen, "Preparing a Community for Family Life Education," Child Welfare 57 (Dec '79)

Notes



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