



KEYS TO ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES

Introduction

God has called every Seventh-day Adventist Church be a transforming agent in its community, following the methods of Jesus to bring help and hope through ministries of compassion in His name (see Luke 4:16-21; *Ministry of Healing*, p. 143). Adventist Community Services (ACS) is the descriptive label for a wide range of public services provided by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is also the name of the denomination's community action agency that operates at the church level. (See chapter 2 for explanation of the difference between ACS and ADRA.)

Even though problems such as poverty, disease, disaster, and other social problems are multiplying around the world, there is a positive side to this challenge. These ever-present problems present unlimited opportunities for God's people to experience the joy of service in providing compassionate care that alleviates and prevents suffering. This opens doors to reach people with the hope of Jesus Christ in the midst of their struggles.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church at the highest level has renewed its commitment to community services and redoubled its efforts to support and encourage this important ministry. The 2001 World Survey of church members revealed, among other things, that only 29% of our members are involved in their community. Findings from the World Survey are reflected in the Adventist church's "Tell the World Initiative," which has seven areas of emphasis: spiritual growth, community involvement, personal witness, city outreach, church planting, evangelistic programming, and media ministry. Goals have been set for each area of emphasis. One of the goals is to raise our community involvement to 40% by the year 2010. We invite you to join us in meeting that goal—and, in the years that follow, to continually increase the ranks of God's mighty community services army.

This Adventist Community Services leaflet is a tool for creating an organized response to the needs in your community. It is intended for an international audience. The church in North America has its own extensive handbook—*Ministries of Compassion*, published by AdventSource—from which this leaflet has been adapted. (We use the term "ministries of compassion" to refer to any kind of helping ministry). The ACS leaflet is intended for guidance on the fundamentals of starting or growing community services ministries and is not a policy book. While it replaces Lay Activities Leaflet No. 10 (1976) it does not replace any policy documents or manuals produced by any division, union, or local conference. Some of the ACS leaflet's contents may need to be adapted to suit the policies and procedures of the country or Seventh-day Adventist divisions where it is used. The principles of organization described herein are time-tested, so they should be considered a strong basis for establishing an effective Adventist Community Services program and ministry; however, the local situation must prevail.

Chapters 1 through 4 and chapter 6 are foundational for any type of program. Chapter 5 discusses specific ministry areas.

We affirm those individuals and churches, large or small, who are already involved in the community. It is our prayer that this tool will help you think through how your church can be more involved in the community; bringing hope and healing to people in the name of Jesus.

*General Conference Sabbath School & Personal Ministries Department/
Adventist Community Services International*

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Chapter 1 – Why Adventist Ministries of Compassion

On Sabbath morning, during Sabbath School and church, skate boarders can often be seen riding past the main doors of the Central Coast Community Church (CCCC) in Wyong, NSW, Australia. The church meets in a community youth center facility, next to a skate board park. The CCCC members were excited about moving in to the center as the skate boarders were part of the group the church wanted to reach. CCCC is committed to being a church that holistically serves its community.

For several years, CCCC church members have provided breakfast five days a week at the local public elementary school in conjunction with Sanitarium Health Food Company. This school has many students from needy families. Eventually, the church was asked to provide an Adventist chaplain for this public school.

Pastor Wayne Krause and his members believe that the local church should be the place where people with all types of challenges in their lives are made welcome, and feel loved and forgiven. Starting with three individuals, this church now has an attendance of more than two hundred. CCCC members believe that working in the community is just as important as working within the local church. All CCCC members sign a covenant of commitment to their church after attending a membership class. Part of that covenant is that they will be involved in a ministry in the community. Church leadership encourages people to join other organizations in the community rather than set up all of them themselves.

Central Coast Community Church has three members who were involved in witchcraft, and at least one former prostitute. Members of a heavy metal band found Christ there. Heroin addicts are attending church. They have a Sabbath School class that is a smoking class. It started by accident with people who felt accepted at their church even though they smoked. Since the community youth center where the church meets is a public area, where smoking is not allowed, the smokers would gather in an outside gazebo to smoke. Someone noticed this and started a Sabbath School class there.

Pastor Krause has what he calls his office at a Gloria Jeans coffee shop in Borders Bookstore in the local shopping mall in Australia. He spends quite a bit of time there, doing counseling, Bible studies, and running a small group. The people who run the coffee shop take appointments for him, and he has already been asked to conduct three weddings for the staff. One person from Borders has attended CCCC and the owner of the coffee shop has jokingly said he will put a cross on one of the tables so people know Pastor Wayne is there. . . .

Called to Holistic Ministry

Those who wait for Christ to return have been given a special purpose on earth. “I have sent them into the world,” Christ declared as He prayed in the garden before His

crucifixion (John 17:18). And as He ascended into heaven, He directed His followers to “go and make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The imperative verb in this text is “make disciples.” The other three verbs—“go,” “baptize,” and “teach” are all helping verbs; elements in the key process of making disciples. The fundamental mission of the church is to find, persuade, and encourage men and women, boys and girls to be followers of Christ—doers of the word and not just hearers (James 1:22). To make disciples it is necessary first to go “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), and establish a ministry of presence with “every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9). Even before winning a hearing with any people group, Christ’s servants can begin to demonstrate His compassion. Adventists work to “first meet the temporal needs” and “then find an open avenue to the heart” where they can “plant the good seeds of virtue and religion” (Ellen White in *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 4, page 227). The display of compassion for the hurting, the poor, and the unjustly treated is testimony to the truth about God. Throughout scripture God unfailingly urges compassion for the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow. (Deuteronomy 14:29, James 1:27) “Our God is full of compassion,” exults Psalm 116. “He rises to show you compassion,” exclaims the prophet Isaiah, because “the Lord is a God of justice” (Isaiah 30:18).

Jesus focused His ministry on the needs of people. In Luke 4:17-19 He makes His first public statement of what His life and ministry are all about. Verse 17 records that “he found the place,” so this was not an accidental selection. Verses 18-19 claim divine anointing of His work, and state several purposes or goals: “to preach good news to the poor...to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed . . .”

Often we “spiritualize” this text, declaring that the poverty is spiritual, not economic; that the prisoner and oppressed are under religious oppression, not physical bondage, etc. That is not an honest presentation of the text. The original language is very clear. Christ is speaking of real low-income people, real incarcerated criminals, real victims of disease and social injustice. He is reading from Isaiah 61, and it is clearly a passage referring to God’s intention to establish a Kingdom for His people in which there will be no more poverty, injustice, violence, disease, unhappiness, and despair. However, the economically poor are not the only ones who have needs that God’s people can address. All populations—poor, middle class, and rich—should be served by Adventist Community Services.

Acts of social concern testify to the very core truth of salvation. “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives” for others, asserts the New Testament. If a believer sees someone in need “but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in” that believer? Christ’s love must not be portrayed only “with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth” (I John 3:16-18).

Demonstrations of compassion for the disadvantaged and downtrodden are a tangible evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence (Isa 61:1-4). They provide the "look and feel" of Christ's message, just as surely as preaching, teaching, and various print and electronic media provide the content. The Adventist Church should be known as a place where those in crisis will find comfort, and those without hope will find a "Blessed Hope."

God has given very specific commands to His people to stand up for social justice. "If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him.... Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. You must not...sell him food at profit" (Leviticus 25:35-37). The prophets repeatedly warn in God's name, "woe to those who make unjust laws...to deprive the poor of their rights and rob my oppressed people of justice, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless" (Isaiah 10:1-2).

In fact, the Bible connects the Christian obligation to work for social justice to Sabbath keeping. Isaiah 58 is a chapter that Ellen White urges Adventists to read regularly. It is addressed to people who are devout believers who, God says, "are eager to know my ways" (verse 2), who fast and pray (verse 3). But God condemns them for "breaking the Sabbath" (verse 13) because they exploit workers, quarrel and seek their own selfish advantage. God says that the kind of worship He demands is "to loose the chains of injustice...to set the oppressed free...to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor with shelter," (verses 6-7) and promises that "if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday" (verse 10).

Social Action in the End Time

Christ places special emphasis on social concern as a mark of His people in the end time. In Matthew 24-25 we find Christ's most extensive teaching about His second coming. At the beginning of the passage, the disciples want to know, "when...and what will be the sign of your coming?" (verse 3) Jesus takes several steps and many verses throughout the two chapters to answer this question, beginning with "Watch out that no one deceives you" (verse 4).

Christ speaks a little of signs of the end, but uses many more words to teach us *how to wait* for His return. In chapter 25, He uses the parable of the ten bridesmaids to teach us to be careful not to become spiritually weary and lax while we are waiting for Him, and then uses the parable of the talents to teach us that as we wait we are expected to use our abilities and resources in continuing His ministry.

Christ brings His teaching to a climax by giving us a picture of the great, final judgment. In it He portrays God as deciding who to save on the basis of whether or not His followers fed the hungry, housed the homeless, cared for the poor, treated the sick, and visited the prisoner. Those who are lost are quoted as saying that they ignored the

problems of poverty, justice and hunger because they did not see God as involved in these issues. God condemns them by saying, “whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me” (verse 45). Truly social justice and the ministry of compassion is an important part of Adventist eschatology.

Why is social action so important to Adventists who believe that Christ will come soon to rescue us from the problems in society? Because it is a living witness to our soon-returning Lord. When we take a stand for justice, compassion, and healing, we demonstrate the values of the coming Kingdom.

Social Action and Adventist Heritage

So what is the origin of the common myth that Seventh-day Adventists don’t get involved in social action? So long as Ellen White was alive, she constantly emphasized the balanced, holistic mission of God’s remnant church. (See her books *Ministry of Healing*, *Christian Service*, and *Welfare Ministry*.) It’s interesting that *Bible Readings for the Home* has a section entitled, “Our Duty to the Poor.” There you will find a doctrinal study on social concern that was taught as a regular part of the baptismal preparation of all converts up until the 1920’s. It appears that Adventism has lost this important part of its original teachings through the years, but that does not make it any less a part of historic Seventh-day Adventist faith.

The interest of many younger Seventh-day Adventists in social action, the growing ministry of ACS and ADRA, and new proposals for inner city projects and homeless ministries are all a solid part of the Seventh-day Adventist heritage. They are an important part of what the Bible teaches, and thus an important part of what it means to be Adventist.

The Ministry of the Laity

The mission of Christ is equally the responsibility of every person who believes on Him. “To each one...is given” some ability, and therefore some responsibility, to minister in Christ’s name (1 Corinthians 12:7).

The Holy Spirit provides “gifts” that enable believers to engage in “service” (1 Corinthians 12:4-5). To “each” believer “gifts” have been given “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:7-12). Many examples of spiritual gifts are given in the New Testament: teaching, evangelism, etc. One mentioned in Romans 12:8 is the gift of “showing mercy.” The Greek word used here is also translated “compassion” elsewhere. (See Matthew 18:33, Mark 5:19 and Jude 22.) God calls the laity to be ministers of compassion just as surely as He calls prophets and preachers.

A healthy, Spirit-driven congregation does not wait passively for people to come to the church and its activities, but proactively reaches out to the surrounding community and the wider world. It works intentionally, as Christ did, to mingle with people...show sympathy to them, and minister to their needs. (Ellen White in *Ministry of Healing*, page 143.) It provides a range of services that meet the expressed needs of persons in the community. Adventist service projects that are church-sponsored and community-based portray an authentic, Spirit-guided ministry of compassion. Even though they do much good, private projects conducted by individuals do not fully reflect God's intentions. The process of building teamwork is so fundamental in developing Adventist Community Services activities.

Welcome to Our Church!

The Adventist Church is increasingly multicultural, and very often the residents in the neighborhoods where a local church reaches out are of a different generation or sub cultural background than the majority of those who make up the congregation. Since Seventh-day Adventists believe that the remnant people of God are made up of "every nation, tribe, people and language" (Rev. 7:9), any congregation that wants to reach out must be willing to welcome into its midst men, women, and children of quite different cultural experiences than their own.

Intellectual consent to this idea and the actual practice of hospitality are two separate steps in this process. A healthy, growing local church will practice real, tangible hospitality that can be felt by newcomers from a variety of backgrounds. The lay leaders in the congregation will be "given to hospitality" (1 Timothy 3:2). Intentional efforts will be made to educate church members, change prejudiced attitudes, and create conditions under which all can be made to feel truly welcome.

Be Visible and Active in the Community

Adventist Community Services works to foster a strong public awareness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a caring, Christ-centered resource in the community. A growing, healthy Adventist congregation works to make itself visible in the community and known as an asset to the neighborhood. ACS programs and personnel are key tools in this effort.

If a Seventh-day Adventist group really wants to effectively serve in Christ's name, it must begin with a careful effort to hear and understand the perceived needs of those it wishes to serve. Attempts to "force feed" the public on topics about which it has little or no interest will only widen the gap, rather than bridge it. Needs assessment can be carried out with a wide variety of tools: analysis of demographic and other available information, telephone and door-to-door surveys, interviews or meetings with community leaders, focus group research, etc. (more on needs assessment in chapter 4).

Visibility requires the use of publicity through an active communication representative, an advertising program, and placement of the denomination's media ministries and publications in the local context. But more than that, after a needs assessment has been done, *the local church should invest in at least one solid, needed "good neighbor" activity that it provides consistently and visibly in the local community.* In this way it is perceived as making a contribution to the community beyond its religious self-interests and becomes the subject of positive word-of-mouth communication among the general public.

We must urge Seventh-day Adventists to be actively involved in public, moral issues as a Christian witness. It is a good thing for the members of Adventist congregation to be seen as citizens who make a constructive contribution to their neighborhood. A healthy, growing congregation will want to be known for more than being simply "a nice church." It will stand for something consistent with Adventist theology and standards. It will work to educate its members concerning the moral issues they face in the world today and urge them to register and vote, write letters to legislators, and take other appropriate steps to engage in a vigorous witness for the right, even when it is not popular. Seventh-day Adventists have historically placed as much emphasis on the collective witness of standing together on such issues as alcohol, slavery, and religious liberty, as they have on the individual witness of church members who do not use foul language, steal, or commit adultery. Each is an essential element in the total witness of the Adventist mission and message. The activist church is not inconsistent with the evangelistic church.

Which Kind of Church Is Your Church?

Robert Linthicum,¹ one of the great leaders of urban/community-based ministry, states that there are three kinds of churches:

1. The church *in* the city (community)
 - This refers to location.
 - Members are not from the community.
 - There is little or no involvement in the community.
2. The church *to* the city (community)
 - This church has a sense of responsibility to do something for the community.
 - It decides unilaterally what the community needs—without doing a needs assessment to diagnose their needs.
 - It then invites the community to participate in programs in which the community might have no interest.
3. The church *with* the city (community)

¹ Robert C. Linthicum, *Empowering the Poor: Community Organizing Among the City's 'Rag, Tag, and Bobtail.'* (Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications, 1991), pp. 21-30.

- Sees mission to the community as a partnership.
- Discovers from the community the burning issues.
- Brings the ministry of the church out into the community.

In other words, this is the church that ASKS the community: What needs do you see are not being met in the community? e.g. Is it poverty, drug, and alcohol abuse? What organizations are already doing something? What areas are not being covered—because there are not enough resources? It says, “We want to help—How can we help?” Then it makes a strategic plan and gets out there—*with* the community! Sometimes this church collaborates with existing organizations in the community to meet the expressed needs.

Which church is your church?

So What?

Research in a random sample of hundreds of Seventh-day Adventist churches across the North American Division demonstrates that a strong community services program—a holistic approach to evangelism—is correlated with church growth. This has also been true in Seventh-day Adventist missions around the globe. This mindset not only promotes numerical growth, but kingdom growth, preparing the way to “Tell the World” of Jesus’ love.

Why are social action ministries such as those conducted by Adventist Community Services so important to the mission of the remnant church? Because they reveal a belief that faithfulness to Jesus Christ includes compassion for the poor, the hurting, and the victims of injustice. Because they say something important about our God. Because they constitute a living witness to the Advent Hope. Because they make a practical contribution to church growth. Because the Bible teaches that we should. Because Christ asked us to do it in preparation for His soon return. Because people need the Lord.

Chapter 2 – The Mission of Adventist Community Services

The mission or purpose of Adventist Community Services (ACS) can be stated very simply: *To serve communities in Christ's name*. For those in leadership positions, there is a need to unpack this statement in a more detailed description of what ACS is all about.

Why the Name Adventist Community Services?

Until the World War II era, the humanitarian work of local Seventh-day Adventist churches was known as the Dorcas Society (from Dorcas in the New Testament). This ministry of unselfish service started in 1879. Groups of women formed a society and met frequently to provide clothes and food or money for families in the church or the immediate community with temporary needs. Some churches wanted to involve men and started the idea of the coed Good Samaritan Society.* By 1953, the General Conference broadened the concept of service to address many other kinds of needs in a manner more appropriate in an increasingly urbanized society. This new organization was named Health and Welfare Services by Seventh-day Adventists and by 1970 it had a shorter name, Adventist Community Services. The essential change is to give local units many ways of organizing to meet any kind of community need.

* In some parts of the world, men involved in church-based community services organize themselves under the names Adventist Men or Nehemiah Skill Association.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Adventist Community Services (ACS)

Adventist Community Services is the channel through which local Seventh-day Adventist churches address the needs of their immediate community, neighborhood, or city.

People often ask, “What is the difference between ACS and ADRA?” “Why can’t we call ourselves ADRA or merge our efforts into one organization?” ADRA is the official non-government organization (NGO) sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist church to provide international relief and development. As such, their efforts receive funding support from governments and companies who require them to have a separate administrative, financial, and program management structure from the church and its other institutions. The Seventh-day Adventist church needs both ACS and ADRA. ACS operates on behalf of local churches—motivating, training, equipping, and mobilizing church members at the grass roots level. ADRA is a church-owned agency that works at a global level.

There are occasions when it is appropriate to work in concert with ADRA on specific local projects. ADRA personnel are also excellent resources for training ACS workers or planning ACS projects. Both ADRA and ACS fulfill their purpose without regard to ethnicity, politics, or religion. Because of the deeply held belief that human life is infinitely valuable, ACS and ADRA work directly with community groups to effect desired change. Both cooperate with other agencies and organizations in fulfilling their primary goals.

Values and Guiding Principles of ACS

The values which have shaped ACS are traditional Christian values: the potential of each individual to reflect the image of God; the dignity which is inherent in every person; and the importance of quality in human life. ACS approaches the person as an integrated entity comprised of physical, mental, social, and spiritual facets. ACS works on behalf of people of all social economic levels. It regards the poor with respect, as partners with whom it works in a learning and sharing relationship. People of higher classes also have needs which ACS should address.

Community development is viewed as an integrated process which addresses the basic sources of poverty and social disintegration, seeking to build self-reliance in the individual and equitable social relationships. Strengthening the family is a fundamental focus of community development.

ACS strives for excellence in all that it undertakes. It accepts accountability for the use of its resources, and the implications of its actions. It respects the legal standards that apply in the countries and communities in which it functions, and upholds standards of integrity in its activities. ACS recognizes its responsibility to its constituency. It upholds the values of a modest lifestyle among its employees and volunteers. ACS fosters dynamic relationships with church and community leadership.

As a needs-oriented organization, ACS concentrates its efforts in a variety of areas that include community-based social services such as food pantries, soup kitchens, clothing distribution, thrift stores, drug and alcohol abuse and prevention assistance, disaster response, crisis counseling, tutoring and mentoring, career training, job placement, refugee resettlement, immigration assistance, health screening and education, family life and health education, elder care, primary health care for the medically indigent, and ministry to the homeless, the disabled, and people with AIDS. It is also interested in social problems such as addictions, unemployment, and literacy. Community-based program development includes a wide range of activities leading to improved health, economic and social well-being, and increased self-reliance. Through formal and non-formal education and training, ACS focuses on developing competence and skills in areas appropriate to community needs

Community needs can also be met by the creation of small-scale institutions which deliver essential services in areas where they are inadequate or nonexistent.

Churches with a strong disaster response capability and a track record of effective response can often develop community services centers or other permanent programs in the aftermath of major disasters including fires, floods, hurricanes, or tornados, as well as the results of a major civil disorder, epidemic, or environmental pollution. Small, medium, or large churches might partner with other churches or with existing organizations in a community to help meet expressed needs more effectively.

The bottom-line principle that guides ACS is that its mission parallels the ministry of Jesus, who came for the very purpose of undoing the devil's work (see 1 John 3:18).

Four Levels of Community Services

Work can be done to meet needs in any community at four different levels. Like the traditional parable from India about a group of blind men describing an elephant based on what they feel with their fingertips, groups often assume that the level where they work is the only thing to be done. There are, in fact, at least four different levels at which something valid can be done about any social concern.

Level 1. Church volunteers, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and in most other faiths, usually work at the level of "*relief*," providing immediate supplies and services to meet the most basic lack of drinking water, food, shelter, blankets, clothing, etc., by individuals and families. Most government welfare programs work at the same level, providing a check or a voucher to enable families to purchase basic necessities. Relief work is often needed. In some emergencies it is a life-or-death necessity. Disaster response teams, refugee camps in areas of upheaval, and homeless shelters in large cities are all necessary to the survival of suffering people.

In *Churches that Make a Difference*,² Sider, Olson, and Unruh state that this level of community service is like *giving fish* to someone. But it is better to teach a man or woman to feed their family than it is to continue to provide emergency meals forever. Once an impoverished person has been empowered to meet his or her own needs, he is in a position to thrive and grow. She can regain her dignity and invest her talents in productive activity. On to Level 2. . .

Level 2. We can also work at a second level, "*economic development*." For example, families in developing areas can be provided with seeds and tools along with information about improved farming techniques. Another example may be a "thrift store" where used clothing and household goods create jobs as well as provide a method of distribution that protects the dignity of the poor.

Sider, Olson, and Unruh break down this level into two parts: (1) Individual Development, which includes transformational ministries that empower a person to improve physical, emotional, intellectual, relational, or social status. This is like *teaching*

² Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson, & Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2002, pp. 86-87.

people how to fish. But personal transformation has limited impact if there are no jobs, or if a family is spending most of its limited income on rent because there is not affordable housing. Therefore (2) Community Development is needed, which renews the building blocks of a healthy community, such as housing, jobs, health care, and education. This is like *providing fishing tools.*

Level 3. Some Adventists also work for "*systemic (structural) change*" (also known as advocacy), seeking to change the institutional policies and laws that encourage unjust or unhealthy conditions. An example is efforts to impact laws that make housing affordable or work or living conditions more humane, or to help disadvantaged people gain access to resources and opportunities that will make their life better. Sider, Olson, and Unruh would say this is like *making sure everyone in the community has equal access to the fishing pond.*

Level 4. This level can be called "*community action.*" At the community action level all of the other levels (relief, economic development, and systemic change) are brought together in a well planned strategy, implemented by a coalition of organizations, to make a neighborhood or nation a better place in which to live. Bandages are important when a person is bleeding, but it takes more than a "band aid approach" to make a real difference. We encourage each ACS organization to decide locally at which level it can currently work, ever striving to increase its capacity to work at more challenging levels.

Program Priorities

ACS must learn to pick and choose where it can develop significant work. When it does not do so, several problems result. They include: Having a presence, but not programs or services; becoming a "jack of all trades and a master of none;" having insufficient resources to be a reliable "neighbor" in the community; having difficulty recruiting volunteers; having priorities that are established on the preferences of those who are providing the funding rather than community need.

The viability of ACS as an agency capable of maintaining effective, credible ministries of compassion will ultimately depend on the degree to which it can find a practical balance between: Community and local church expectations and needs; availability of competent people to manage the operations; quantity of resources available; the degree of donor interest and support; and the level of programming excellence necessary for local needs to be best served in the long term.

Therefore consideration needs to be given to the following when plans are made and priorities decided: Community needs; potential for real change in the life or condition of people; expertise available; management capability; existing organizations and structures; the needs of the church; potential for sustaining programs; and degree of opportunity to be a player in meeting community needs in a usually crowded field of local charitable activities.

Chapter 3 – Organization

The specific form or structure of a ministry must be determined by the needs it is attempting to meet and the context within which it works. Form follows function—no one organizational blueprint can fit every situation. A number of formats or structures are outlined here to provide a menu of possibilities and define terms in a standard way. A sample menu of services is discussed in Chapter 5. Remember that an organization is not a building, it is a network of people who combine their resources to help their neighbors by giving their time, abilities, money, and/or donated goods.

Local church ACS Unit or Department – A local church unit or department where volunteers in a church conduct activities in which the local church serves the community is one of the most common ways to organize. Units or departments operate under the authority of a committee appointed by the local church. These are usually single-focus activities, not a cluster of services and programs that characterize a center. Local churches elect a Community Services Director who plays a key role in discovering the needs of the community, mobilizing a response from the church, program development, communication, and inter-organizational cooperation. The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* outlines the duties of the local church Community Services Director. In smaller churches, the Community Services Director will be the primary worker in a particular ministry. In larger churches he or she will be a facilitator, helping other members function as leaders in specific programs or activities.

Adventist Community Services Center – A center is a program and a facility established which provides organized services to the general public on a regular, posted schedule. It can be located in a part of a church building or a separate building, but it must have regular hours of business and a public sign identifying it as a community service organization. It is expected that a center operates several programs addressing specific community needs in addition to food and clothing, such as health screening and cooking classes. A center should have a separate and private interview room where trained personnel can talk with people about their situation, their needs, and resources available to help them. The center is an organizational hub of individuals, small groups, and programs.

Adventist Community Services Agency – An agency is a program sponsored by two or more local churches which operates from a neutral location and has trained paraprofessional or professional leadership. It should meet local requirements to be recognized as a non-government non-profit humanitarian organization. Like a center, an agency should have a separate and private interview room where trained personnel can talk with people about their situation, their needs, and resources available to help them. An agency, like a center, is an organizational hub of individuals, small groups, and programs.

Adventist Community Services Federations – A federation is a training and empowerment network formed to support front line leaders in community service ministry. *Constituents of ACS Federations represent ACS units, centers, and other ACS*

entities in a geographic area of a local conference. The Community Services Federation has a long history in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and is still strong and viable in many places. To remain viable, the federation needs to go beyond inspirational or ceremonial occasions and be involved in actively and intentionally empowering leaders. Federation meetings should include a time for training and encouraging leaders. They should also include a time for sharing about successes and challenges and creative problem solving.

Chapter 4 – Starting a Community Services Program

This chapter is about the process of creating a local Seventh-day Adventist humanitarian organization. It details the step-by-step procedures and skills necessary to move from little or nothing to something, whatever the particular kind of program or structure you have in mind, and whether your project will be in a rural or urban area.

The process of organizing is essential to any ministry that seeks to involve more than one or two individuals. The skill of organizing is central to the leadership of any believer who wants to develop a ministry that can bring compassionate service to more than a handful of the poor and hurting.

There exists a great deal of human need and suffering in your community. If unemployment and homelessness are not present in large numbers, there may be divorce, domestic violence, substance abuse, disease, and loneliness. At the same time there are tremendous resources within the Adventist Church to meet these needs through ministries of compassion. Valuable expertise, specialized training, and time can be harnessed and applied toward alleviating suffering through an active Adventist Community Services (ACS) organization. These valuable resources can make a real difference in the lives of many in the community, and demonstrate that the Seventh-day Adventist Church cares.

What Kind of Program?

A menu of opportunities is open for exploration. Programs range from hunger and homeless projects or tutoring programs for inner city children, to family services and health education for the middle class, to services for immigrants. ACS no longer has one standard program. Rather it is recommended that each local church carefully study the needs of the community and prayerfully consider how best to respond, based on local resources and interests.

Is your community or church rural or urban? The challenges and opportunities for churches serving in small towns and rural areas versus larger city or urban areas are very different. In rural areas the needs may be more obvious and basic. The economics in small towns and rural areas are often far more dire and resources such as people, money, and time are more stretched. In urban areas needs can be far more complex and obscure. While there are more people and more resources they are far more dispersed. In urban areas your ministry must compete with many others for volunteers, money, and goods.

Role of Needs Assessment. The importance of a needs assessment as the foundation for the whole process cannot be overemphasized! ACS is a needs-driven organization. Unless good information has been gathered through a careful process, local leaders cannot really know what the needs are and will not have the compelling vision and rationale necessary to organize an effective program.

What Kind of Structure Will Work Best?

In addition to a menu of service possibilities, there is also a range of choices as to how you want to develop your ACS organization. Chapter 3 listed a number of different formats, or structures, of local organizations. Your local church needs to select the structure that best fits with your local needs and resources.

How to Build Your Local Organization

Over the past 30 years, hundreds of local community service programs have been initiated. Many have succeeded and many have failed. Experienced community service professionals have found that there are a number of important sequential steps in building a viable organization. You cannot afford to skip around or slight any of these steps if you want success for your new program. These steps may need to be “scaled” according to your church or program size. If you follow the steps outlined here, you will assure your program the best opportunity for success.

1. *Form a joint planning committee with other Adventist churches in the area.* Church pastors and key lay leaders from each Adventist church in your city or rural areas should be invited to meet together to plan and oversee the development of a program. It is essential that churches in an area work cooperatively in the process if the program or project is to be effective and favorably perceived within a community. It may be helpful to invite representatives from communities of faith that are not Seventh-day Adventist. The mobilization of resources from more than one church multiplies the impact that can be made within an area. There are many places, however, where churches are unable to work together because of distance or transportation barriers.

2. *Agree on someone to serve as project leader.* Usually, at the second or third meeting of the planning committee, a project leader or temporary project organizer is chosen. This should be someone who has training in leadership. The person will need to devote 200 to 500 hours to guiding the group through the next steps outlined here.

The project leader must first spend time interviewing members of the planning committee and other interested persons they discover. During these visits each person’s vision for the new project is explored and a list is made of their skills and interests. This information will guide the selection of the type of program the new organization will undertake. During this process, the project leader will sit down with each of the pastors to help them understand why the church may want to become involved. The project leader will make a presentation to the congregation and church boards in the area to help determine which churches will join as sponsors and what financial support is possible.

The project leader will need to do a visual survey of the potential geographic area to be targeted. This survey identifies the obvious problems in a community, the kinds of places people live and work, etc. Also, the project leader will also need to contact community leaders and other community organizations in the area. These will be important contacts for information on needs in the community and for cooperative efforts in the future. They can be very helpful in providing technical support or consultation and evaluating your program later.

3. Conduct a comprehensive community needs assessment. It is impossible to know what the needs of a community are without careful study. A proper needs assessment will reveal a detailed picture of the community, its people, neighborhoods, social problems, felt needs, and resources. It should include a listing of what other non-government and government organizations are doing, and what gaps in service exist. A complete needs assessment involves several important activities, including: (1) individual interviews with key community leaders;³ (2) demographic information;⁴ (3) results of surveys of persons living in the target area administered door-to-door, or by telephone;⁵ and (4) a walk or drive-through (windshield survey) of the target area.⁶ The bottom line in a needs assessment is to find needs that can be addressed by your particular ACS organization.

All of this information should be reviewed by a small group of trained persons used to analyzing and interpreting data. The information should be compiled into a brief report that describes the geographic area, its people, the most pressing social issues, and a menu of possible programs for consideration. The planning committee should

³ See Appendix A for sample questions to ask community leaders. (From *Understanding Your Community*, p. 94.)

⁴ Some regions have demographic info in local government offices, libraries, and realty associations. Also one can contact the Center for Metropolitan Ministry (www.sdacmm.org) in Takoma Park, Maryland, USA, by phoning 301-270-9350. Demographic information can be obtained online for specific geographic areas (in the U.S. see www.census.gov or www.epodunk.com). Here are some websites for international databases:

- Geography and environment website <http://www.gesource.ac.uk/home.html>
- CIA Fact Book (Profiles by Country) <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/af.html>
- World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/countries/>
- The Population Council <http://www.popcouncil.org>
- Demographics Net Asia <http://membres.lycos.fr/demonetasia/>
- Type in google.com, then type “demographics”

⁵ A simple questionnaire can be developed and administered easily by volunteers going door to door. This survey can include four to six simple questions about the needs in the area and interest in selected services. See a sample questionnaire in Appendix B. Also, *Understanding Your Community*, by Monte Sahlin, has several samples in Tools 8-A, 8-B, 8-C, and 8-D. NOTE: Later, when inviting the community to the resulting events, say, “As a result of your community’s input, we have chosen to provide the following services” (list dates and place—no more than three at once).

⁶ Windshield surveys can best be conducted in teams of two (one to drive and another to make notes), or individually, with a tape recorder. Note features of the area, layout of streets, traffic patterns, kinds of housing, upkeep of homes, general impressions about the population (age group, occupations, ethnicity, etc.). See Appendix C for a sample Windshield Survey worksheet. (From *Understanding Your Community*, Tool 3.)

use the information to decide what services the new organization may provide in the beginning.

4. Officially organize. Whether your organization will be a local unit/department, center, or agency, it must be established officially by the church board or the boards of sponsoring churches. If it is a center or agency, a date should be established for a meeting to approve a constitution and by-laws and elect a group of people to serve as the organization's board. The planning committee should prepare a proposed constitution and a list of nominations of the board of the new organization in advance of this organizing meeting. It is recommended that this new board not be the same as the church board. There can be overlap, but there is too much business for one group to serve as both boards. A good board must be carefully selected. It should have five to twenty members and include a variety of persons such as a pastor, key church leaders, community leaders, persons with professional skills, and persons of vision. It is important to find a group of people who understand the broad role of the board and do not attempt to micro-manage the director or the details of operation. That will seriously cripple the new program.

5. The new board should begin to meet immediately. There are several key decisions it must make quickly to maintain interest and momentum. The board now replaces the function that has been held by the planning committee up to this point, and the planning committee goes out of business. Of course, it is a good idea for a number of key people from the planning committee to be elected as board members in order to ensure continuity and the success of your new program.

Immediate items on the board agenda include: what services to provide; appointing a director; and which site and which facilities will be used for the operation. The church basement is an acceptable place to operate many programs if sufficient space is set aside for the exclusive use of the program and adequate signs are posted to let the public know where to come for help. Money spent on a director and a good program is a far better investment than money spent on a building.

6. Develop the program. Specific program implementation is the next step in building an organization. The director, in consultation with other organization leaders and the board, should develop program plans that outline in detail the services to be provided, the necessary personnel and budget, and the schedule for implementing services. Effort should be made to ensure that program plans are realistic and complete as they provide the basis for raising funds, enlisting volunteers, and the entire ACS presence in your community. It is also important to keep in mind that it may be necessary to modify program plans as they are implemented. Be specific, but don't set them in concrete.

7. Develop a support base for your agency. Not every church member will see the ACS program as important. It is essential to find a constituency of church members who believe in, and take interest in, the center, who pray regularly for its success, and tell others about the impact it is having in the community. Among this constituency

will be a number of individuals who want to give regularly to support the center. The support of a constituency is vital to its success. Every successful community ministry is backed by a constituency which empowers and encourages those in leadership and on the front lines. A constituency is built one individual at a time through personal contact. Constituents include volunteers, board members, supportive pastors and lay leaders, community colleagues, former clients, civic leaders, and interested church members. Collect individual's names for your mailing list. Start a regular newsletter. Distribute an annual report. Conduct a couple of major meetings each year where you share your successes, affirm the support of volunteers and donors, and seek the presence of key community leaders.

8. *Start fundraising.* There is no doubt about the importance of fund raising and resource development to the success of your organization. An adequate development program is broad-based and includes activities such as obtaining in-kind contributions (contributions other than cash) and recruiting volunteers. Sources of funding include grants, contracts, direct mail appeals, special offerings, special events, and deferred giving through wills, trusts and bequests. Successful fund raising takes a great deal of effort over a long period of time. There is not sufficient space here to review the techniques and procedures of fund raising, grant writing, and resource development.

9. *Begin to recruit and train volunteers.* Once a program plan, the beginnings of a constituency, and initial funding are in place, it is necessary to recruit and train the volunteers needed to deliver the services planned. Sources of volunteers include church members, students, and organized groups such as Sabbath School class members. Volunteers from outside the Seventh-day Adventist community can also become involved. Schools often have student volunteer programs. Community residents near your church or center and former clients are also good volunteers, as well.

10. *Conduct a major kick-off event.* If you are opening a new center or agency, the obvious founding event is a ribbon cutting for your facility. A more decentralized program may need to develop a street fair or mass rally of some kind or a seminar on a crucial issue. You need an event that is substantive, yet festive. It must include an opportunity to invite the entire community, including important civic leaders such as the mayor, commissioner, or local legislator to speak and play a role in a ceremonial photo opportunity such as cutting the ribbon. It is equally important to position your event to attract the local news media. They need a concrete, substantive story on which to base their coverage. This might be the opening of a new facility, or commitment of an amount of money to a particular objective, or the opening of a specific number of slots for a tutoring program or job-training program. They are less likely to be interested in soft stories such as studies of problems, research, seminars, educational events, worship services, etc. Whatever your reason for getting the media out, be sure to hand them a fact sheet that describes your ACS organization.

11. *Plan a retreat with the board after the first year.* After the first year of operations it is important to devote quality time for evaluation and long-range

planning. By this time the board group will have worked together for a while. The various unforeseen circumstances in the implementation of plans will have surfaced, and it will be time to review plans, adjust them for the future, and chart a new strategy for your organization. It will also be time for a careful reflection on scripture and the mission God has given your ministry organization, allowing quality time for praying together, seeking God's guidance. Out of the struggles of the first year and the bonding from a retreat, the board and the director are ready to begin a mature level of operation and take full advantage of the opportunities God will bring to them. It may be wise to invite a skilled consultant from the conference staff or another professional to act as facilitator for the weekend.

Chapter 5 – Special Programs

The specific programs to be offered will be determined by a study of the community needs and God's calling. The following is a description of the most common programs and services provided by ACS organizations:

Basic Social Services – The need for food and clothing are very basic and exists in many communities. In the Adventist Church the Dorcas Society has historically focused on these basic social services. Dorcas is still a part of Adventist Community Services. Most churches of every denomination provide this essential service to the chronic poor, victims of disaster, or those in temporary crisis. Food or clothing needed to help people can be purchased or collected from food drives. In some cases, food banks collect overstock, dented, or mislabeled food in large quantities and make it available for non-government organizations to distribute. Such distributions are most effective when recipients have an opportunity to choose from what is available the type and quantity of food their family needs. In like manner clothing can be collected and distributed.

These essential services should not be provided without the added assistance of interviewing and referral service. Those who can't meet their need for food and clothing have other longer-term needs. Increasingly complex human needs can best be addressed by programs that provide personal service with the use of listening, needs assessment, information, referral, and follow-up, or advocacy skills. This skilled personal attention is part of a "basic service" that everyone who seeks help from your community services organization should receive. Listening is important for understanding a person's situation and to truly know their needs. Listening affirms a person's value and demonstrates caring. Through active questions you can discern a person's needs and help them make a plan for meeting those needs.

Referral to other organizations helps them connect with resources they need that go beyond what your organization provides. Most often people are unaware of services that could benefit them or do not know how to access those services. Once you have made a referral you should follow up to see what happened. Did the person receive the help they were seeking? Was it adequate? Often the process breaks down and you need to be an advocate for the person to help them through the process, and address any issues of unfairness or lack of attention.

Finally, the interview situation provides unlimited opportunity to minister to people: to share about your own struggle; to provide encouragement; and, if appropriate, to share scripture and pray with them. (Witnessing through ACS is discussed in detail in chapter 6.)

These basic services (food, clothing, and interviewing) serve as a foundation for all other helping programs.

Disaster Response – Man-made and natural disasters, small and large, occur continuously. At such times, survivors need an outpouring of basic supplies and an

influx of help to recover and rebuild. Disaster response activities can range from providing immediate shelter and feeding people to distributing food, water, and other supplies, and helping people clean up or rebuild their homes.

Before getting involved in disaster response, it is important to identify governmental and nongovernmental agencies that are active in disaster response and determine what services they provide. Next, you will want to identify what needs are not being met and determine if you can assist in filling a need. Once a needed role is identified, volunteers must be recruited and trained. Once trained, volunteers should continue to communicate, collaborate, cooperate, and coordinate with other governmental and nongovernmental agencies.⁷

Community Health – Many individual and community health problems can be prevented and alleviated with the right approach. Programs to screen people for health problems, provide doctor’s referrals, and give health information are needed in many communities. These initiatives, along with health classes or cooking classes, can increase the general wellness of a community. Initiatives that work along side other organizations to target larger health problems that are systemic or potential for epidemic are also important opportunities for ACS.

Tutoring and Mentoring – Success in school is key to finding jobs in adulthood that pay enough to live on. Tutoring and mentoring programs can help students have success in school. Tutoring programs include volunteers who work in school or in after-school study centers to help students learn basic concepts and complete their assignments. Mentoring addresses growth opportunities as related to individual development. Study centers that are well equipped with tables, chairs, reference books, and computers, if possible, are inexpensive to set up and maintain.

Job Finding & Job Training – Job finding and job training programs enable people to become more financially independent and contribute back to their communities. Job-finding programs involve trained volunteers who work one-on-one to guide people in finding places of employment, making application, preparing for an interview, and maintaining employment. Job training programs teach people the specific skills needed for specific jobs, as well as general employment skills needed for success in any job. Job finding and job training programs are also inexpensive to set up and operate.

Family Life & Counseling – Families around the world face many difficulties. Communication, finance, parenting, discipline, violence, and the effects of alcohol or drug abuse undermine the functioning of the basic family unit. Children who grow up

⁷ Each of the geographic areas (countries, states, or provinces) will have their own requirements for documentation. As an example, it is often required that the client/disaster survivor sign a Release of Confidential Information before their information may be shared with other supporting agencies or organizations, so be sure to become trained in the ACS program for your area. Through such training, you will learn about the regulations and policies that apply for your area.

with these problems often face the same difficulties as adults. Programs that help families deal with difficulty include counseling centers where trained volunteers talk with people individually and in groups. Classes on family life topics also strengthen families in your community. Family & Counseling programs should be offered in collaboration with the Adventist Church's Family Ministries Department or local family service organizations.

Crisis Intervention – Crisis intervention is a type of psychological first aid used to defuse emotional trauma for survivors of a disaster, terrorist attack, assault, or other traumatic event. It is not counseling or therapy but may assist survivors in regaining control and successfully integrating the trauma into their life story. Crisis Interveners are volunteers who are trained to assist individual survivors or groups of survivors in various capacities including emotional intervention that allows for ventilation and validation of the trauma experience to ease the transition back to normalcy, acting as a companion making sure that victims receive the assistance that is made available after a traumatic event, and acting as advocates for victims who may be unable to speak for themselves. There are various models which may be used to train ACS volunteers. One is a model developed by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation. In the U.S., training is often provided by NOVA, the National Organization for Victim Assistance.⁸

HIV/AIDS Programs – HIV/AIDS is a major health crisis around the world. Several major initiatives have come out of training and planning conferences to address the HIV/AIDS problem and its attendant issues. HIV/AIDS programs include education for prevention of HIV/AIDS, the care and support of HIV/AIDS orphans, home-based care for the sick, education programs to combat discrimination and stigma, and income-generating projects designed to assist with poverty alleviation, such as beekeeping, raising goats, dressmaking, and the establishment of bakeries.

Elder Care – Elder Care Ministries coordinate education and services related to aging, health, finance and social issues for seniors in the church and community in collaboration with community-based elder care programs.

Youth Programs – In some regions teens and young adults are trained in disaster response and other community services projects. Youth services units are organized through educational institutions or local churches. In North America, such a program is called Youth Empowered 2 Serve (Y.E.S.).

Nehemiah Skill Association – In some parts of the world, skilled carpenters, plumbers, masons, etc. respond to human needs by banding together to repair or build buildings in their community. For more information, contact the Caribbean Union Conference in the Inter-American Division.

Confronting Poverty Programs – ADRA Canada is involved in the funding of community service initiatives. Working through local Adventist churches, community services centres, schools, and conferences that implement projects, ADRA Canada works

⁸ Adapted from www.communityservices.org

towards the vision of “a world without poverty.” Knowledgeable staff provide training and resources to Adventist church entities to assist in starting new programs and improving or expanding existing ones. Whether large or small, there are outreach opportunities in every community. The following are some ideas for programs and services fostered in Canada that can be used worldwide:

- Adopt a family – assist with food, clothes, household items, furniture, transportation, utility bills
- Child care – give single parents an evening to go shopping or provide after school care
- Back-to-school supplies for a child
- Community kitchen – hands-on, small group, low cost cooking. Food is taken home by participants to use during the month.
- Dress-out program for prisoners on release
- Drug abuse prevention – especially among youth in the middle grades
- Sewing and mending service – includes quilt-making for those in need
- Family finance seminar/counseling
- Emergency food pantry
- Free medical clinic – dental, eye, podiatry
- Adventist Health Screening – provide free blood pressure reading, BMI, grip-strength test, health age, stress profile, healthy lifestyle tips
- Health seminars on topics such as healthy lifestyle, smoking cessation, depression recovery, grief recovery, cooking
- Homemaker services – for seniors, new single moms, the ailing
- Skills training – for those on social assistance or working poor
- Phone a friend – for seniors or latch-key kids
- Baby layettes – for teens, single moms
- Meals on wheels – for seniors or the unwell
- Homeless initiatives – clothes, food, sports activities, mobile clinic
- Community gardens – to teach economically challenged how to grow and preserve food
- Home renovation – for working poor, single parents
- Healthy eating club – monthly vegetarian potluck with health nugget
- Furniture bank – repair and recycle furniture

Additional ideas and actual implementation sites can be found on ADRA Canada’s website at www.adra.ca .

There are many other kinds of programs that can be operated by ACS organizations. Information about such programs can be found on the internet and by contacting other non-government organizations.

Chapter 6 – Witnessing Through Community Services

Through humanitarian acts we make known the just, merciful, and loving character of God. To work with those in need is an expression of our love for God. And a simple act of compassion on its own speaks volumes about God's love for human creation. The compassionate ministry of Jesus is its own abundant motive and reward. Therefore, contacts through ACS need not result in a spiritual discussion, Bible studies, or baptism. We do not require individuals to accept our religious materials or attend evangelistic meetings in order to benefit from our services. We serve others ANYWAY, even if there is no apparent spiritual interest. We serve others without worrying about what we will get out of it, because that is what Jesus would do. Sometimes we call this "disinterested benevolence." However, "disinterested benevolence" does not mean we are not interested in people's spiritual needs.

The ministry of community services may, however, provide an opportunity to discuss spiritual needs in the context of your care and concern for their physical or emotional needs. In attempting to meet the spiritual needs of those we serve, we have no better example than Jesus Christ Himself.

In the book Ministry of Healing by Ellen G. White (page 143) we find this statement: *Christ's method alone will bring true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "follow me."*

This passage suggests several important guidelines for addressing spiritual matters as opportunities arise.

- 1. Pray.** Pray that God will prepare your heart to serve Him in this way. Pray for the persons to whom you are ministering, and when the right time comes you can pray with them to invite Jesus into their heart.
- 2. Timing is important.** Once a person's chief concerns have been heard and help is provided, people are much more interested in talking about spiritual things. If someone is hungry or sick or worried about something, they are unable to give much attention to other concerns, no matter how important. Discussions about spiritual matters, prayer, worship attendance, etc. should never be perceived as a requirement for service.
- 3. Spend time with people.** We cannot get to know someone without being with them and spending time with them. Discussions about matters of faith are best done between people who know each other.
- 4. Show sympathy.** Demonstrations of compassion in real and practical ways make more real and believable the statement that God loves the lost so much that He sent Jesus to die for them. Consistent acts of compassion put our faith in action.

- 5. Meet the needs.** Listen so that you know a person's needs and do your best to meet those needs. Beyond what you can provide immediately, there are places you can refer someone to get the help they need.
- 6. Win confidence.** Time spent in genuine fellowship wins confidence.
- 7. Bid them follow Jesus.** As you get acquainted with people and help them with their needs, you will know when the time is right to mention spiritual matters. The Holy Spirit will guide you. We can ask, "What are your spiritual resources for dealing with your situation?" or "Have you thought about centering your life on Christian values or focusing your life on faith in Christ?" You will be amazed at the response. This will lead to an opportunity for you to share from your faith and introduce them to Jesus.
- 8. Take it slow.** Ask questions. Allow for exploration. Introduce them to Jesus. Don't promise miracles. God works in His time.
- 9. Offer appropriate literature.** Well-placed and well-selected material can be a blessing to the people you serve. The best material is attractive, hopeful, and meaningful, focusing on the basics of salvation and hope for the future. Old Sabbath School Bible Study Guides (quarterlies), issues of *Adventist Review*, and union papers rarely serve this purpose well.
- 10. Keep your purpose.** Always remember that your mission is to meet community needs. Witnessing can be a by-product of that. But even if people aren't ready for the spiritual part, meet their other needs ANYWAY.

When we are led by Jesus and have a sincere compassion for others we will have many opportunities to offer God's encouragement, support, comfort, and unconditional love. Start somewhere and He will multiply your unselfish efforts.⁹

⁹ For more insights on witnessing through community services, see Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson, & Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference*, chapter 5: "Integrating Evangelism and Social Outreach."

Official Statements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Over the years the Seventh-day Adventist church has issued official statements about many societal problems or critical social issues. The statements are on the official website for the world church, and include Abuse and Family Violence, AIDS, Drugs, Environment, Homelessness and Poverty, Human Rights, Literacy, Marriage, Racism, Sexual Abuse, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Smoking and Tobacco, and more. You can access these statements at <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/index.html>

Resource Organizations

AdventSource is the North American Division distribution center for leadership materials and it stocks a wide variety of resources which can be of benefit in building a successful permanent Community Service Center or other ACS project. Other world divisions also use *AdventSource*. A catalog entitled *Community Services Resources* and containing information about books, booklets, training videos, manuals, signs, logos, business cards, ID badges, work uniforms and other items is available by making contact at the address or phone numbers listed below. Their catalog is free on request and on-line.

AdventSource
5040 Prescott Avenue
Lincoln, NE 68506
Telephone: (800) 328-0525
Fax: (402) 486-2572
www.adventsource.com

The Center for Metropolitan Ministry (CMM) is a resource center for pastors and lay leaders in urban and suburban Seventh-day Adventist congregations. CMM provides customized demographic reports for use in planning community outreach ministries, consultant and training services, and other information services.

Center for Metropolitan Ministry
HMS Richards Hall
Columbia Union College
Takoma Park, MD 20912
United States
Telephone: (301) 891-4037
Fax: (301) 891-4189

Resources

***Churches That Make a Difference*, by Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson, & Heidi Rolland Unruh. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2002.** –This book explores the biblical mandate and how-to's of developing and maintaining an effective holistic ministry that combines evangelism and social outreach. This comprehensive practical resource will help your congregation embrace change, resolve conflict, overcome social barriers, and move into a life-changing outreach of holistic ministry. Available from Amazon.com.

***Ministries of Compassion Series*.** –The official series of booklets in North America for Adventist Community Services, inner city programs, and social action projects. Other divisions can adapt its content. Learn how to get organized, conduct a needs assessment, find funding, and develop basic services. New areas include information on tutoring programs, public relations, community health clinics, building an effective volunteer program, support groups, and domestic violence. Available from AdventSource.

***Understanding Your Community*, by Monte Sahlin. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry & Takoma Park, MD: Center for Metropolitan Ministry, 2001.** –This volume is more than helpful analysis. It includes a complete kit of tools and easy-to-follow instructions on how to use them in your community to benefit your local ministry. It also explains what the resulting information means and how to use it to improve your local strategy. It includes: Increasing the visibility and impact of your ministry, How to know the needs of the people in your community, What makes community involvement effective?, How to use demographics to improve your outcomes, The religious profile of your community, Conducting a community survey, Deciphering the dynamics and power structure of the community, Use this powerful tool to help identify, understand, and address the felt needs in your community. Available from AdventSource.

***To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City*, by Mark R. Gornick. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002.** –If you want to be powerfully inspired and motivated to do community service in Jesus' name, read this book! The New Song Community Church transformed its devastated community in the Sandtown section of Baltimore, Maryland, from a forsaken ghost town to a thriving community. Available from Amazon.com.

***Mission in Metropolis: The Adventist Movement in an Urban World*, by Monte Sahlin. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry, 2007.** –This volume weaves together theological principles, social analysis, stories of front-line ministry and practical ideas for pastors, ministry directors, and congregational leaders. In a world where most people now live in a metropolitan area, this book provides a wide range of essential information for anyone serious about the mission of Christ in contemporary contexts. Available from AdventSource.

Websites

www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acsi

www.communityservices.org

www.adra.ca

www.adra.org

Miscellaneous Ideas for Community Services Leadership:

Below are ideas from the Caribbean Union in the Inter-American Division that you may wish to adapt to your region:

- Seek to preach one Community Services sermon/quarter on Sabbath, Sunday night, or Wednesday night. Ask the preacher to make a call at the end of the sermon for new members to join the army of Community Services members.
- At every Community Services meeting repeat the Community Services Pledge and Motto.
 - Community Services Pledge: “Following the example of Jesus, I promise to be kind and merciful to all in need so that the name of God may be glorified in my community.”(*Stand at attention when repeating.*)
 - Community Services Motto: “By the grace of God, I promise to carry the gospel on the wheels of community services to my community.” (*Stand at attention with right hand on heart and repeat.*)
- Promote and conduct annually, a Community Services Day in your church. Think big and plan big.
- What are your innovative ideas?

Appendix A

Questions to Ask Community Leaders

1. What are the biggest assets in our community?
2. My church wants to help with some of the most important needs in our community: What are some of the important needs that you think it might be a good idea for us to focus on?
3. What could a church group do that would really be helpful in the needs you have listed? (Go through the list one-by one and get as specific as possible on suggestions for each one.)
4. Who are some of the influential leaders in the community we should interview with the same questions? Do you have contact information for them? May I tell them you referred me?
5. What do you know about my church? What is your impression of its contribution to the community in the past?

Appendix B

Community Services Survey

Dear Friend:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in your community is endeavoring to become more involved in community life. We want to be of service to you and to your community by responding to your expressed needs. Please help us to identify these needs. Add any needs not listed. Thank you!

1. In which of the following services would you have an interest?

Please check the appropriate items below:

- Nutrition and vegetarian cooking classes
- Weight control seminar
- Visiting and prayer for the sick
- Care for the elderly
- Clothing and food assistance
- Ministry in crisis (bereavement, grief, mid-life, other)
- Marriage enrichment seminar
- Parenting skills for children and adolescents
- Youth and peer pressure management
- Mentoring and counseling program for youth
- Substance abuse
- Classes on the meaning of life/my relationship with God
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. In your own words, identify the three most urgent needs in your neighborhood.

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)

3. If the services and activities you indicated were offered in your neighborhood, would you participate? Yes No

Watch the local newspaper, TV, radio, or flyers to announce services.

Appendix C

Windshield Survey

Area covered
Geography
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Street layout
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical boundaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identity markers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traffic flow
Homes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kinds of housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clusters of homes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appearance
Residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age group
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impressions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationships

Personal Ministries Leaflets

No.

1. How to Run a Church-Based Bible School
2. The Missionary Program for the Local Church
3. Motivating Members to Witness
4. Giving Bible Studies
5. Small Group Ministry
6. Personal Witnessing
7. Methods of Door-to-Door Visitation
8. Bringing People to Decisions for Christ
9. The Work of the Personal Ministry Leader
10. Reaching and Winning Various People Groups
11. Health Evangelism
12. Reclaiming the Missing
13. Sermon Preparation
14. Public Evangelism
15. Principles of Church Growth
16. Adventist Community Services
17. Prison Ministries

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