

It is the responsibility of pastors, church elders and youth directors to foster strong AY Societies in all churches and companies in their territory.

The church operates through the AY Society to dedicate special and quality time to the youth.

Local conference youth directors should help organize the AY Societies in their field, train their leaders and monitor their functions.

It is part of the duties of youth directors to visit the AY Societies, counsel with the pastors and advise in improving the function of each society within their territory.

Once a year, preferably soon after the churches have finished their elections, youth directors should conduct AY leaders' seminars to explain the yearly program to church leaders, introduce materials to be used, conduct leadership training and discuss itineraries.

The quarterly youth ministry reports from the local AY Societies should be constantly monitored in order to help the AY Societies improve and upgrade their programs.

The AY Society operates two training programs for senior youth. These are intended to equip the senior youth for church leadership. The AY Leadership Course prepares and trains the youth for general leadership and all functions of local church leadership. The Master Guide Course prepares the youth to work especially with the children of the church. Both programs should be sponsored by the AY society.

6. Financing Youth Ministry

Youth work, like every other type of ministry, requires money. Your church probably already has a category within the church budget for Youth Activities, the Adventist Youth Society, or Pathfinder Club. If you are not currently budgeting for youth ministry, meet with your board and/or finance committee and make it a priority to do so.

Many youth leaders find the budget assigned to them inadequate to the task at hand. If your church simply cannot allocate a greater portion of the budget to youth work, then you should enthusiastically support appropriate fund-raising activities planned by the youth group. Youth often work quite hard to raise money to attend youth congresses, go on mission trips or put off special programs. If the church—especially the pastor, elders, and board members—willingly support these fund-raising efforts, that support means a great deal to

young people and their leaders. It also sets a good example for the rest of the congregation and reduces the financial burden on the families of the young people and on youth leaders, who often pay for many activities out of their own pockets when other resources run dry.

7. Youth Sabbath School

The youth Sabbath School is the weekly teaching time and fellowship time for your young people. Some churches face problems with low attendance and lack of enthusiasm for youth Sabbath School programs. Some youth leaders will downplay the importance of the Sabbath School class, but by doing so they miss a valuable opportunity to disciple youth on a regular basis and to integrate them into the life of the church. Youth leaders should be encouraged to make use of all resources the church provides to make Sabbath School attractive and meaningful to youth. Parents should also be encouraged to make Sabbath School attendance a priority, both for themselves and their children.

8. Weekly Youth Programs

A church with a lively youth ministry will also provide other weekly programs for the youth, in addition to the Sabbath morning class. “While a successful youth ministry program in the local church includes a strong youth Sabbath School, there must be a specific time and place for more interaction, fellowship, recreation, witnessing outreach, and leadership training, which are all a part of the concepts to be fostered in the Adventist Youth Society,” counsels the *SDA Church Manual* (p. 79).

In many churches the most important youth program is the weekly Adventist Youth meeting or vespers program, generally held on a Friday or Sabbath afternoon to coincide with sunset. The content of these programs varies widely in different churches, though they often take the form of a youth-led, youth-oriented worship service, with a musical program, dramatic presentation or group activity sometimes taking the place of the sermon. The value of a weekly youth program cannot be stressed too much. Again, encourage your youth leaders to explore all the resources available to them to make the AYS meeting time valuable for the youth. The *Youth Ministry Accent*, a quarterly magazine produced by the General Conference, may provide additional ideas.

Ellen White advocated a lively, creative, youth-oriented approach to what are now called AYS meetings. “Do not imagine that you can arouse the interest of the young by going to the missionary meeting and preaching a long sermon. Plan ways whereby a live interest may be aroused. From week to week the youth should bring in their reports, telling what they have tried to do for the Saviour, and what success has been theirs” (*Gospel Workers*, pp. 210, 211).

Some churches have a less traditional style of weekly youth meeting, perhaps in the form of a small-group youth fellowship that might meet on a Friday or Sabbath evening or at the same time as your regular church prayer meeting on Wednesday night. This type of meeting can be wonderful for discipling youth and building fellowship within the group,