

QUICK START GUIDE FOR LOCAL CHURCH WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Introduction

Women are the backbone of the church. In the North American Division women comprise nearly 60 percent of church membership and serve in every department of the church. Women's contributions are vital to the mission and success of the church.

Why, then, is women's ministries needed? An active women's ministries in the local church can enhance the overall church program in many ways. By ministering to women's unique needs and by purposely training and equipping women for service, women's ministries can help ensure that every woman in the church finds a way to be involved in the mission of the church.

The purpose of the Women's Ministries Department is to encourage, equip, promote, and challenge Adventist women in their journey as disciples of Jesus Christ and members of His Church and to bring women's perspectives to the issues facing the Church.

Women's ministries should be ministry-driven. It should be much more than a retreat, a tea party, or an annual Sabbath program featuring women. Women's ministries is about ministry (service) and making a difference that will count for eternity. Although nurturing and social activities play a part in the overall women's ministries program, the purpose of such events should be to help meet women's needs and equip them for service.

Women's Ministries Mission Statement

The mission of the Women's Ministries Department of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists is to model Jesus Christ through meaningful relationships and effective ministries.

Our values and objectives are to:

- Provide opportunities for women to deepen their faith and experience spiritual growth and renewal
- Elevate women as persons of worth
- Address the concerns of women
- Build networks among women
- Mentor young women, teens, and girls
- Promote opportunities for wider service for women
- Challenge Adventist women to use their talents and spiritual gifts for the glory of God in the home, church, and community

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

The women who take leadership positions in Women's Ministries do not necessarily need to have previous leadership training. They must, however, be willing to be taught and be able to work well with others in the church. Some of the qualities they should possess are:

Spiritual qualities:

1. An intimate relationship with God
2. Serves God, not self
3. Devoted to prayer
4. Committed to God and His Word
5. Models servant leadership style

Positive personal qualities:

1. Works well with women
2. Possesses integrity
3. Thinks before acting
4. Courageous
5. Faces issues
6. Visionary
7. Serves others
8. Positive self-image
9. Motivates others
10. Teachable spirit
11. Delegates work
12. Good time manager
13. Keeps confidences
14. Is proactive
15. Emotionally balanced
16. Reliability

Personal qualities to avoid:

1. Burnout
2. Sense of inadequacy
3. Spiritual dryness
4. Fear of failure
5. Unloving attitudes
6. Conflict with authorities
7. Critical spirit
8. Habitual lateness
9. Pettiness
10. Strong individualism

11. Over commitment
12. Compulsive talking

Four wrong motivations for leadership:

1. Pressure from others to become involved
2. Desire for prestige and admiration
3. Attempt to fulfill a personal need for acceptance and approval
4. Unhealthy need to have power and authority over others

Starting a Women's Ministries in Your Church

If women's ministries is new in your church, the newly-elected leader's initial goals should be to:

- Partner with the pastor
- Form a committee if the Nominating Committee doesn't select one
- Prepare goals based on the needs of the women God has directed you to serve
- Take your plans to the church board

Partnering with the pastor is an important first step. The pastor will be your best ally if he/she perceives that women's ministries is interested in augmenting the entire church program, not just in having a few social events for women. There are several division-wide women's ministries events each year (see page 8) for which a special sermon by a woman and/or a special program is suggested. The women's ministries leader should work with the pastor to schedule those dates at times that best fit the church calendar.

No matter how small the church is, the women's ministries leader needs a team to help plan and implement activities. The input of other women will be helpful in assessing the needs of the women in the church, which is essential for planning programs and activities that draw maximum participation. The committee will also help plan and implement activities and events.

In some churches, the Nominating Committee selects the women's ministries committee; in other churches, the leader selects her own committee. The best committee is one that reflects the makeup of the church members: a mixture of ages, vocations, and ethnicities. That way, your planning will take into consideration the needs of all the women in the church, not just the women you know best.

As a member of the church board, the women's ministries leader is responsible for keeping the board apprised of the part women's ministries is playing in the overall mission of the church. This will include coordinating women's ministries activities with the church calendar to avoid conflicting with other events. As an example, women's ministries would not plan competing activities during such church-wide events as an evangelistic series (ideally, the Women's Ministries Department will be actively involved

in supporting the evangelistic series) or perhaps a Pathfinder or school outing (since so many women of the church would likely be involved with Pathfinders or the school). Working with the church board to benefit the entire church should be the goal of women's ministries.

Developing a Vision Statement

Having a vision for your ministry is essential. Nothing meaningful can be accomplished unless you know where you want to go and how you plan to get there. At the very first meeting with your committee, begin working on a vision statement for what you want to accomplish through women's ministries. As the leader, you should help guide the vision, but remember that you don't have a monopoly on good ideas. Encourage team members to contribute as well. This will ensure that they will commit to and support the vision.

The following steps are helpful in developing a vision:

1. Spend time in **prayer and reflection**, asking for God's guidance in developing a vision for your ministry.
2. **Conduct a survey** of the women of the church to discover their needs. A sample survey can be obtained from the North American Women's Ministries Department or online at <http://www.nadwm.org/article.php?id=205>.
3. With your committee, establish the **core principles** of the department — what you believe is important and what should guide your planning. For example, if there are women in your church who might not be able to participate in events if a fee is charged, you would want to ensure that events are financed without fees. In many churches, asking for donations rather than charging fees works very well. Putting donation receptacles on each table or in prominent areas is effective. This would make it possible for all women to participate. If there are divorced or single women in your congregation, you will want to be intentional about including them in your plans. If there are young mothers in the church, providing babysitting would make it possible for them to attend.
4. When you have determined the core principles that will guide your ministry and have collected the surveys from the women of the church, it's time to **analyze and discuss** the information and decide on possible activities and ministries.

Setting Goals

After you have developed a vision statement to guide your ministry, the next step is to begin setting goals of what you want to accomplish for the year. Be sure to make realistic goals; otherwise, you will set yourself up for failure. As you achieve your goals,

you can begin to aim higher. It might be wise not to attempt too many projects the first year. It's better to have a few successful projects than to attempt several large events that fail.

Remember: Goals are about outcomes, not busyness. For example, if your goal is to enrich women's spiritual lives as well as to enjoy each others' company through a prayer breakfast, you must be intentional about including activities that are spiritual. Without a specific goal of spirituality, it would be easy to get carried away with the food and decorations and neglect the spiritual aspect.

Your goals should be measurable. One goal for the prayer breakfast might be that 70 percent of the women attending respond to an invitation to reconsecrate their lives to the Lord at the meeting or that 30 percent of the attendance at the event be women under age 35.

You can also measure the success of your goals by having the attendees fill out short evaluation sheets after each event.

As you make plan, be sure to **list your goals**: For example, three goals for lifting up Jesus might be:

1. Sponsor one prayer breakfast this year.
2. Start two small group Bible studies.
3. Mentor two younger church members.

Notice that each goal is measurable and easily attained.

Four goals for serving or ministering to women might be:

1. Grocery shop for three senior women each week.
2. Select several families in and out of the church who need seasonal garments and take the garments to them before the appropriate season.
3. Send women "just thinking of you" cards.
4. "Adopt" a new-baptized woman or family in the church and nurture them in the faith.

Focus of Women's Ministries

Each church will have special needs and resources that affect how the Women's Ministries Department functions. The following principles will help keep women's ministries from becoming merely a "social club" for the women of the church.

- **Spirituality** – Part of the goal of women's ministries should be to ensure that every woman in the church experiences a life-changing relationship with Jesus. Even social events should have a time of spiritual emphasis such as a devotional that is thoughtfully planned to inspire women.

- **Outreach** – Women’s ministries is concerned with outreach as well as “in-reach.” Ministering to the women who attend church should not be the only goal. In order for women’s ministries to enhance the entire church program and encourage women to use all their spiritual gifts to God’s glory, women’s ministries should be very deliberate about inviting 1) non-attending members and 2) women from the community to *every* women’s ministries event. This will let the non-attending members know that they are missed and wanted back, and the community women will begin to feel comfortable in the Seventh-day Adventist church as they make friends and enjoy fellowship with the women of the church. Then it is easy and natural to invite them to other events at the church such as cooking schools, women’s special days of emphasis, small prayer and/or study groups, and evangelistic meetings, especially those conducted by women. In addition, events for the community, such as health fairs, seminars on abuse prevention, self-defense for women, single parenting, divorce recovery, to name a few, should be a part of the church women’s ministries agenda. Even very small churches with limited resources can partner with local hospitals, law enforcement organizations, and community health groups to offer community events.

Women’s ministries can sponsor mission projects in your community or one nearby. Near you there are the following potential areas of need:

- women’s shelters and homeless shelters
- hospitals and nursing homes
- impoverished neighborhoods
- adults and young people who can’t read proficiently
- adults who can’t speak English
- single mothers who are faltering under their burdens
- unwed pregnant teenagers

They all need the help of the women in your church. Why not determine to be the hands and feet of Jesus to reach out to these and other individuals and make a difference in their lives?

- **A Ministry for Every Woman** – A big part of spiritual health is reaching out to others to make a difference in their lives. Therefore, one of the goals of women’s ministries should be to help every woman in the church find a ministry — an area in which to be of service to others. This may be accomplished in several ways. One is by sponsoring outreach events to the community, ministries to the girls/teens of the local church and school, or participating in a conference-sponsored outreach event. Or you might have spiritual gifts seminars to help women discover their gifts and then help them find practical ways to use their gifts. It might even be finding special ways to minister to their own children or families.
- **Tell Your World** – We don’t have to travel to a distant place to find individuals who need to know the Lord. They are all around us, and God has equipped each of us

- **Evangelism by Women** – Women should be encouraged to get involved in evangelism. There may be women in your church who are gifted with the ability to speak in public, give Bible studies, or lead small prayer or study groups. Women’s ministries leaders should provide opportunities for these types of activities, being sure that women in the community are invited to each event.
- **Reconnecting** – Making contact with women who have stopped attending church and letting them know they are missed and wanted back is as important as baptizing new members. Women are uniquely qualified to engage in this ministry, and North American Division Women’s Ministries has developed a program, [Heart Call](#), to facilitate this ministry (see [Resources](#)).
- **Mentoring Young Women** – Meeting the needs of young women, teens, and girls and involving them in women’s ministries is a wonderful way to ensure that they stay in the church. They need to know that they are loved and valued by the adult women. Planning activities for them and including them in your activities and events will reap rich rewards.
- **Abuse Education, Prevention And Healing** – Surveys of large numbers of church members indicate that abuse of every kind is as prevalent in the church as in the general population. For that reason, in 2001 the General Conference, at its Annual Council, voted that one day a year be set aside for every church around the world to observe [Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day](#) to educate members about the evils of abuse of every kind and to help prevent it. Resources to enhance the local church’s observance are available on the NAD Women’s Ministries web site: www.nadwm.org.

Besides observing the day each year, women’s ministries should work to help make the church a safe place for abused individuals to receive help and healing. This includes believing a woman when she reaches out to you and recognize that she should *not* be counseled that it is her Christian duty to stay in an abusive relationship, since this is unbiblical. She should receive counseling without the perpetrator being present, since she will not be safe to tell the true story to the counselor. Abuse victims and their children may need help getting to a place of safety. Providing such help could be an important service of women’s ministries.

The young people of the church may be at risk for sexual abuse by church members. Any time a minor reports abuse, the police should be called to investigate the allegations, irrespective of who the reported abuser is.

Abuse of every kind destroys lives and distorts the victim’s view of God. Abuse is a church problem, because in order to have a healthy church, the members must be

healthy. Women's ministries should recognize that the problem exists in the church and mobilize to do something about it.

Women's Ministries: What it Is and What it Isn't

Women's Ministries Is

- A place to address the spiritual, emotional, physical, and social needs of women in the church
- Encouragement for women to improve their potential for participation in the mission of the church
- A support system for hurting women, whether they are suffering from divorce, abuse, or simply loneliness
- A forum to address topics and issues that affect women
- Encouragement for young women through a college scholarship program
- Mentorship of young women so that they experience joy in the Lord and become involved in service in the church
- Recognition that women have many gifts of the Spirit and an attempt to help women to discover and use these gifts to the glory of God
- Encouragement for women to become involved in all areas of ministry in their church, their community, and their home

Women's Ministries Isn't

- A place for women to promote equal rights for women, although we recognize the importance of the issue
- A forum for women who have complaints, justified or not, against employers
- A platform for the ordination of women, although we believe that everyone should use their talents to God's honor and glory and should receive just recognition for work done in His honor
- An arena for male bashing – women's ministries is anti-sexist, not anti-male.
- An exclusive organization – women's ministries encourages inclusion of all women, exclusion of none.

Ideas for Ministry

The North American Division and General Conference Women's Ministries Departments have designated several special days of emphasis each year for observance in local churches. Resource materials such as sermons, seminars, PowerPoint™ presentations, and children's stories are available for these events from the [NAD Women's Ministries web site](#). The Women's Ministries Department in each church is encouraged to participate in the observance of these days. They are designed to encourage women, to highlight the contributions of women to the church, and to educate the church about issues that affect women — and the entire church — such as abuse.

1. Annual Women's Ministries [Special Days of Emphasis](#)

- [Women's Day of Prayer](#), first Sabbath in March
- [Women's Emphasis Day](#), second Sabbath in June
- [NAD Women's Ministries Offering](#), second Sabbath in July
- [Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day](#), fourth Sabbath in August

Even though dates are assigned to these special days, they may be observed at other times during the year (with the exception of the offering). Work with your pastor to find the dates that work best in your church. The important thing is that the events be observed annually in each church.

The annual [North American Division Women's Ministries Offering](#) is listed on the official offering calendar of conferences and unions as the second Sabbath in July. Whenever the offering is taken, donors' tithe envelopes should be marked "NAD Women's Ministries" to ensure that the offering is used as intended.

The offering is distributed and used according to the following North American Division guidelines:

Distribution:

- 40% to the local conference Women's Ministries Department
- 30% to the union Women's Ministries Department
- 30% to the North American Division Women's Ministries Department

Authorized uses:

The offering is to be used solely by the Women's Ministries Department in the conference, union, or division and restricted to:

- a. Evangelistic outreach sponsored by the Women's Ministries Department
- b. Leadership training for women
- c. Other projects as directed by the Women's Ministries Department

Even though none of the offering stays at the local church, the church Women's Ministries Department may request that a portion of the offering be remitted back to the church from the conference women's ministries department. Such requests should be addressed to the conference women's ministries director.

2. Nurturing New Members

Many people join or remain in the church because of relationships, not just a conviction of the doctrines. One of the keys to ensuring that new members grow and remain in the church is to befriend and mentor newly-baptized women, and thus their families, in what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist, keeping in mind that personally modeling Adventist Christianity in settings outside the church is the very best way to nurture them.

Since women are ideally suited for friendships, women's ministries can play a vital role in the church's mentoring and discipling of new members. A New Member Ministry Committee functioning within the Women's Ministries Department and made up of members who have a sincere love for people, witnessing, and soul winning, will be a vital asset to your church. Members of the committee, and all involved in this ministry, should be patient, forgiving, non-judgmental, and have a clear understanding of what their commitment to the New Member Ministry will involve.

Each potential member or new member should be assigned a guardian or shepherd as soon as she makes a decision to be baptized, or closely following the date of the actual baptism.

Role of the Guardian:

- Spend time in prayer daily asking for God's guidance.
- Spend time getting to know the new member and her family, her likes and dislikes.
- Acquaint her with various traditions, organizations, and businesses of the church, such as taking her and her family to camp meeting, visiting our [Adventist Book Centers](#) and introducing them to books, CDs, and DVDs of some of our outstanding denominational speakers and musicians.
- Encourage her to attend prayer meeting, Sabbath school, and Adventist Youth programs, especially if there are young people in her family. Involve her and her family in the social activities of the church.
- Make her aware of our schools and healthcare institutions, and acquaint her with our rich denominational history.
- Watch and listen for red flags that may signal a need for additional support.
- Encourage prayer, Bible study, family worship, and witnessing as she grows in Christ.
- Be her friend, love her unconditionally, and, together, prepare for the second coming of Jesus.

3. M.O.M.S. – Moms Offering Moms Support

M.O.M.S. is a support group for mothers in the church as well as the community. It is geared for both married and single women who are pregnant or who have children from birth to the earliteen years. It is designed to encourage mothers and provide practical help by ministering to the whole woman—physical, emotional, social, and spiritual. Emphasis is given to helping with their parenting and homemaking skills, marriage, family health (including nutrition and emotional health), and spiritual growth. Meeting during the daytime at least twice a month is encouraged, since most stay-at-home moms need the fellowship and support.

A M.O.M.S. group is an excellent way to reconnect with young adults who have stopped attending church.

Guidelines for Beginning a M.O.M.S. Group:

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you.
- Find a few mothers to brainstorm and plan with you.
- Enlist the support of the pastor and church board.
- Decide where to meet. It could be in the church or in someone's home if the group is small.
- Offer free babysitting for the children (get volunteers from the church to babysit).
- Provide snacks or a small meal for the mothers.
- Advertise in the church bulletin as well as the newspaper.
- Send the announcement to former and inactive members.
- Begin the meeting with a short get-acquainted time.
- Have a brief Christ-centered devotional.
- Program ideas include:

Special speaker	Family budgeting
Finding time for prayer/Bible study	Positive discipline
Family nutrition	Your child's self-esteem
Preparing your child for school	Raising responsible kids
Healthy snacks	Self-esteem for women

4. Women in Touch

Friendship evangelism is an important need in every local church. Women in Touch (WIT) is a non-threatening “party with a purpose” for women ages 18-108 to which you can feel comfortable inviting your friends from the community, family, new members, and inactive members. In churches that regularly hold WIT meetings, the attendance from the community averages 50 percent of the total attendance.

The program for each meeting is simple:

- Welcome
- Simple supper
- Devotional, given by an Adventist

- Special feature
- Closing thought

The secret to the success of WIT is doing everything well, even though it is simple.

- Attractive decorations
- Tasty food
- Christ-filled devotional (not doctrinal)
- Varied special features—spiritual as well as secular (guest speakers plus fun features such as a style show or home decorator ideas)

Other tips:

- Offer free babysitting.
- Do not charge admission. Instead, place a small bowl for donations on each table. Generally, the funds received cover the expenses.
- Sell the table centerpieces after the event if they will not be needed again by the church.

5. [Heart Call, a Ministry to Reconnect with Women Who Are Taking a Break from Church](#)

Every church has members on the church books who do not attend. Often members do not intend to drop out of church, but they experience a crisis or illness that keeps them away from church for several weeks, and then it may be difficult to get back in the habit of church attendance. The problem is compounded if no one from the church lets the person know that she is missed. She may conclude that no one cares, so why should she bother going back?

One of the ministries that women are ideally equipped for is reconnecting with non-attending women and letting them know they are missed and wanted back. Heart Call is a ministry developed by [North American Division Women's Ministries](#) to win back women who are taking a break from church. It is about forming friendships with inactive women in the church and loving them back to church. It is a type of evangelism that women can do well, since they are by nature relationship oriented.

Heart Call is an ideal ministry for the Women's Ministries Department, since most women in the church can think of dear friends and loved ones who are among the non-attending members and would love to have them back in church.

To Begin a Heart Call Ministry:

- Make a list of the missing women.
- Pray over this list.
- Share your dreams of renewing friendships and reconnecting with these women with your pastor.
- Together, introduce this program to the church board and then to the church body.
- Form a Heart Call ministry team, which should include:

- a. A leader—a woman with a vision for the ministry who possesses the leadership gifts to pull the team together and oversee the project to fruition.
 - b. A Bible study or small group leader—a woman with teaching gifts who can effectively lead a small group through the [Bible study materials](#).
 - c. An event coordinator—a woman with the gifts of hospitality and organization who will coordinate social gatherings and/or other events to which you will invite the women you hope to reclaim.
 - d. A mentor for each woman to be reclaimed.
- Choose a spiritual mentor for each woman on your list. The mentor's job is to establish a friendship with the woman and simply love her and interact with her in friendly, non-judgmental way.
 - Send a subscription to *Women of Spirit* magazine (available from [Review and Herald Publishing Association](#)) to each woman on your list.
 - When the women have had time to receive their first issue of *Women of Spirit*, the mentors should make contact with each one, asking if they've had time to read the magazine and how they liked it, etc. This is an easy, non-threatening way to make the first live contact with the women being mentored.
 - The church Women's Ministries Department should begin planning events to invite these women to attend.
 - Form small Bible study or prayer groups to invite these women to. They might not feel comfortable going back to church at first, especially if they have been hurt by someone in the church, so these small groups are a good way to help them study, pray, and form friendships with other women from the church.
 - Mentors should reach out to their friend on a regular basis. Invite her to events planned by women's ministries and other events at church that she might be interested in.

Do not end the friendship as long as your friend is willing to remain friends, even if she shows no interest in returning to church. God's children are called to love unconditionally, as Jesus loves, not to drop someone—unless she want to end the friendship.

6. Bible Studies and Small Groups

Study groups are an important part of women's ministries. Women love to study the Bible and other inspirational books. Several Bible studies have been developed for Adventist women. There are DVD Bible studies as well as printed studies. These are excellent tools for women's ministries programming as well as for small group and neighborhood studies. For information about specific studies and inspirational books, see Resources. Also check with [AdventSource](#) and your [Adventist Book Center](#).

7. Women's Ministries Leadership Certification

The [North American Division](#) and [General Conference Women's Ministries Departments](#) offer four levels of leadership certification for women. The program has come about because of the great need for the women of the church to develop skills that will enable them to serve in positions of leadership.

E. G. White reminds us that "There is a higher purpose for woman, a grander destiny. She should develop and cultivate her powers, for God can employ them in the great work of saving souls from eternal ruin" *Evangelism* p. 465. Women's ministries is committed to the task of developing and cultivating the abilities of women.

The curriculum for the leadership certification program has been divided into eight subject areas. They are:

- History and Philosophy (HP)
- Biblical Studies (BS)
- People Skills/Personal Growth (PS)
- Speaking Skills (SS)
- Leadership Skills (LS)
- Writing Skills (WS)
- Nurture Projects (NP)
- Outreach Projects (OP)

Due to the many subjects covered in the curriculum (about 65 in all), the program was divided into four levels. Each level contains seminars from each of the eight subject areas of the curriculum.

In order for certification to be awarded, the participant must complete the required courses in a particular level; these are called Core Requirements. In addition to this, the participant must also complete three other seminars of their choice from among the remaining courses, called Electives.

The leadership certification curriculum can be completed by the women in the local church. CDs containing the seminars for each level are available from [AdventSource](#) and contain everything needed to complete the training, including presenter's seminar and PowerPoint presentation, and participant handouts. The seminar presenter does not have to be certified in order to teach the seminar. The printed seminar materials contain everything needed.

Churches may choose to go through the certification program with just the women in their church, or they may want to get together with other Adventist churches in the area to sponsor a large certification event. Individuals may also complete the certification curriculum by themselves.

There is a checklist on the CD which should be printed so that participants can keep track of the seminars they take. Each course completed should be initialed on the checklist by the presenter. When a woman completes a level of certification, a certificate

is available from the NAD Women's Ministries office, provided proof of completion is presented by the participant.

Reporting and Communication

Communication and record keeping is essential in women's ministries. It can be as simple as a notebook with legible handwritten comments or as high tech as computers can produce. The important issue is that you keep records of your activities and keep your pastor and church board informed.

Your [conference women's ministries director](#) needs to receive regular **reports** from you. The [Report Form For The Local Church](#) is available on the North American Division Women's Ministries web site: www.nadwm.org.

Your report will enable your conference director to report to the conference president about women's ministries activities in the conference. She must also report to the union women's ministries director, who reports to her president and to the North American Division women's ministries director. So you see, it all starts with you. Your report is of utmost importance.

A Final Word

In your position as women's ministries leader, you can have an impact on the entire church. As you spend time in prayer for guidance, the Holy Spirit will give you a clear vision for a ministry that will bless, encourage, and inspire the women in the church as well as in the community. God will give you special wisdom and inspiration for a ministry that will glorify Him and start ripples of influence and blessing that continue into eternity.