

COOL TOOLS FOR SABBATH SCHOOL

The Sabbath School Secretary

The office of the Sabbath School secretary is a vitally important post. It is well for the secretary to have a high regard for the office and to be thoroughly acquainted with every duty. It is essential to know and to hold high principles of Christian thought and action, yet to recognize that principles do not actually exist until they are given expression in duties done, in actions taken, in services rendered.

It is true that much of the secretary's responsibility centers on material things—the checking, ordering, and distributing of needed supplies. Supplies are quite indispensable, and a thorough work must be done here. It is true that the secretary may keep records, and this needs to be done neatly, completely, and promptly. But the secretary, in order to justify the effort, must not only keep records but use them.

These records may become the basis for reports given to the members of the adult division, and of statistical reports sent each quarter to the conference or mission Sabbath School department. But the recitation of facts is helpful only as they relate to persons—their actions, reactions, and influence. Reports gathered from local conferences and missions and forwarded through union conferences and divisions to the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department arrive simply as an accumulation of statistics.

However, when these are compared, analyzed, and interpreted in the light of other current trends and of past achievements, a fairly clear picture of the person in the pew emerges, and the degree of progress toward Sabbath School objectives is indicated. This is the chief justification for statistics, records, and reports, and this is the reason that the local Sabbath School secretary, in most conferences, has the responsibility of keeping accurate and up-to-date records and of rendering prompt, complete, and accurate reports.

The Report

Sabbath School programs may include the secretary's progress report or a presentation on outreach, Investment, improvement, or the Birthday-Thank Offering. It may be arranged occasionally to include a special feature of a different, but related, nature.

This flexible plan allows for a brief weekly progress report by the secretary if the Sabbath

School council so decides. Or it may permit a monthly progress report, more comprehensive in scope, occupying as much as five to eight minutes. Some Adult Sabbath School formats find more unified action in gift-oriented ministries than in a statistical report. It is essential to focus on the meaning and ministry potential rather than external motivation.

As a reporter the Sabbath School secretary must develop a "nose for news." Three, or even five, minutes will not allow time for a progress report plus extensive philosophizing. But the secretary must pray and study to find the story behind the facts and figures and then boil it down until the very quintessence of information, inspiration, and challenge. The progress report will thus feature highlights and sidelights that recognize achievement, encourage strengths, and strengthen weaknesses. Where Sabbath School Actions Units exist, the secretary or superintendent may coordinate report time from the various classes.

The Mobile Secretary

The secretary will do well to be mobile in reporting on the whole Sabbath School. Sabbath duties should be arranged with the assistant or assistants so that the secretary is free to visit the various divisions in turn. With eyes, ears, and heart open, he or she will often discover some outstanding feature, some worthy achievement, or some critical need that may on occasion be brought to the attention of the adult division. This serves to bind the whole school in essential unity through awareness.

Special features and objectives of the Sabbath School, such as Investment, the Birthday-Thank Offering, Branch Sabbath Schools, Vacation Bible Schools, or home visitation, are possible subjects for reports. Occasionally a spontaneous interview with



an officer or member sparks new interest and can be made to serve the cause of Sabbath School promotion. Such an item must be well planned in advance, however, and skillfully guided to foster some desired ideal.

The Duties of the Secretary

The work of the secretary is more than merely the recording of facts and figures and giving reports. Duties may be summarized as follows:

- To track and report Sabbath School progress.
- To distribute to the teachers their weekly supplies and gather the class records and offerings.
- To mark the officers' class record and receive their offerings.
- To check over the class record booklets, supplying omissions, recording the contents of the offering envelopes, and making a list of absent members.
- To keep central records according to the guidelines provided by local conferences or as determined by the local Sabbath School council. In most Sabbath Schools this will include the following: (1) To place names of all class members onto new class record cards at the beginning of each new year in harmony with the continuous membership plan and (1) to assist the membership superintendent in writing the names of prospective members assigned to each class in the Sabbath School Class Record. The secretary is responsible for assisting the teachers in recording changes during the year in class personnel and in the prospective member lists.
- To keep a record of the weekly offerings to missions, the amount of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, the Birthday-Thank Offering, the Investment Fund, and the expense money if the Sabbath School expenses are not included in the budget of church expense.
- To turn over to the church treasurer each week all Sabbath School money for missions as well as Sabbath School expense money and to secure and preserve a receipt from the church treasurer.
- To order through the church personal ministries secretary all supplies and special helps agreed upon by the Sabbath School council.
- To keep minutes of any actions taken by the Sabbath School council.
- To keep all records provided for by the Sabbath School Record and Register. To send reports, as required, to the conference Sabbath School director by the twentieth day of the month following the close of the quarter.
- To preserve all records to pass on to successor.

If the secretary is unable to be present at any session of the Sabbath School, he or she should make arrangements for an assistant to carry out necessary duties.

Distributing Record Booklets and Supplies

To avoid confusion and disorder, everything should be in readiness when the beginning of each Sabbath School program. The secretary should arrive early enough to distribute necessary supplies for each division and class.

Class record cards and envelopes should be given to the teachers just before the opening of Sabbath School. This serves to minimize unnecessary moving about on the part of the secretary and consequent confusion during the opening exercises. When teachers have taken the offering and completed the record, they should place the class envelopes in a prearranged place so that they may be retrieved by the secretary without disturbing teacher.

Bible study guides for the succeeding Sabbath should be delivered to division leaders before Sabbath School opens; these leaders may then arrange for them to be given to the pupils at the close of the school. In small schools, where there are no division leaders, the supplies can be given to the teachers, but they should keep papers and cards out of sight until the close of Sabbath School.

Keeping Records

It is secretary's responsibility to keep class record envelopes and directory up to date and in correct order, writing in the names of class members in ink. It would be well for the secretary to keep a blank piece of paper in each class envelope on which teachers may write down the names of new enrollees. From this slip the secretary can transfer the name neatly written in ink to the class record card, which will present a much better appearance with names all in the same handwriting and in ink.

Every Sabbath School officer and teacher should be enrolled somewhere in the Sabbath School class records. This applies to every division. When the membership is counted, it should include the members of every class in the cradle roll, kindergarten, primary, junior, earliteen, youth, young adult, adult, and extension division. The number of extension division members should be added only at the end of the quarter.

Continuous Membership

Under the continuous membership plan, class membership at the close of the year is carried over intact to the succeeding year. There is no wholesale

or automatic deletion of names at the end of the year. No listing of names by the teacher on the first Sabbath of the year is required unless some reorganization of classes is necessary. The secretary will have transferred the names from the old record card to the new one. Thus the names in each class will continue from year to year, except as fluctuations occur by the adding and dropping of individual names as members may come and go. Newcomers may be added to the membership the first Sabbath they are in attendance if they give assurance that they expect to attend regularly.

It is primarily the teacher's duty to indicate when names of persons in his or her class should be enrolled. The secretary, however, may properly call the attention of the teacher to the matter if the teacher has overlooked it.

The secretary should check class records frequently to make sure that they are kept current.

The secretary should give careful attention to the transfer of members. When a class member is transferred from one class in the Sabbath School to another, the secretary should make sure that the name is changed in the respective class record cards. Likewise, when a child is promoted from one division to another the secretary should transfer the name.

Keeping Files Up-to-Date

Some secretaries may wish to keep records on a computer or other practical means. Another arrangement for keeping an accurate record of actual and potential Sabbath School members is by means of the card file checkup plan. This plan calls for a filing case, indexes, and four sets of cards—white, blue, pink, and green.

Whatever device is used, it is the Sabbath School secretary's responsibility to prepare and keep records up-to-date. It is recommended that one of the assistant secretaries be especially assigned to assist.

Where the card system is used, the following procedure is recommended: The secretary of the Sabbath School should secure a list of the church members from the church clerk. The secretary should then check this list against the Sabbath School class record cards and extension division list, and prepare cards thus (1) Every name on the church clerk's record that also appears on the Sabbath School membership records should be placed on a white card together with the additional information called for. (2) Every name on the Sabbath School record that does not appear on the church clerk's record (un-baptized children and others who are

members of the Sabbath School but not of the church) should be placed on a blue card. (3) Every name on the church clerk's record that does not appear on the Sabbath School record should be placed on a pink card. (4) Names of friends, relatives, former members, and others who may be considered prospective Sabbath School and church members should be placed on the green cards. The address and other information should be included in each category.

From time to time the secretary should check the card file to make sure that it is up-to-date in every particular, especially at the time of a baptism.

Counting the Attendance

Methods of recording attendance vary in different parts of the world field. It is well to check with nearby local conferences to determine what records are required. The attendance includes presence of every enrolled member and all visitors. Ministers and other workers are frequently present at Sabbath Schools away from their home churches. If they are not counted in the schools where they are present, they are not counted anywhere. In that case there is no record of their attendance.

Each teacher should be instructed to record in the proper place on his class record card the number of visitors in his class.

The number of members present plus the number of visitors equal the total attendance for any given Sabbath. At the end of the quarter the extension division attendance should be added. Unless this is done, the record will be inaccurate.

Looking After Absentees

Where Sabbath School Action Units are in place, each class follows a plan to contact absent members. In other Sabbath Schools, the following plan is suggested. When the class record is marked, careful attention should be given to all absentees. As soon as a member's absence is noticed, plans should be made for the teacher or some appointed member of the class to make a personal call upon the absentee at the earliest possible opportunity, preferably that very Sabbath afternoon. A definite understanding should be arrived at as to who will make the visit.

This important matter should not be left to only a chance call. Especially should the teacher make sure that all absent members receive their regular Sabbath School supplies—Bible study guides or any other material distributed to the class. If this cannot be attended to by a personal visit, which, of course, is always preferable, then do not fail to mail the material to the absentee.

If a visit cannot be made, the sending of a note or a card, or at least a phone call letting absentees know that they are missed, is the very least that should be done. A good plan is for the secretary or an assistant to make a list of the names and addresses of absentees and hand them to the teacher before the close of Sabbath School.

Other Class Records and Activities

The superintendents and secretaries are always included in the membership and attendance. In a large Sabbath School where their work will not permit them to be regular members of a class, the secretary should list the officers in a class of their own, providing envelope and record card, keeping a record of the class activities, and taking the offering regularly.

When extension division members attend the Sabbath School, they need not be counted as visitors, for they are members of the school, but are keeping their own records. Only when visiting a Sabbath School other than the one in which they are members should they be counted as visitors.

Extension division members should be supplied with envelopes and record cards provided for their divisions, and also with Bible study guides, mission reports, and such other supplies as are needed. At the end of the quarter, extension division members should be reminded, either by a personal visit or by letter, that it is time to return the envelope and record card to the secretary. New supplies should be furnished them in good time for the succeeding quarter.

Membership, attendance, and offerings of the extension division are to be added to those of the regular school before these items are entered in the quarterly report.

Responsibility for Non-attending Church Members

The Sabbath School has a responsibility for all members of the church whether they attend Sabbath School or not, and if need is a gauge of responsibility, then the greater responsibility is for the non-attending members. Every Sabbath School council should face this challenge with wise and comprehensive plans perseveringly followed so that blessings of the Sabbath School might be brought to the members of the whole church.

The Sabbath School secretary plays a very important role in the response to this issue. As already noted, the secretary's responsibilities include the upkeep of an up-to-date list of actual and potential Sabbath School membership. If files are

current, the secretary may provide names of non-attending church members at any time. These names should be assigned to teachers, extension division workers, or other experienced Sabbath School members at least once a quarter so that someone will be sure to: (1) visit them, manifest a kindly interest in them, and tell them something of interest about the Sabbath School; (2) give them the Bible study guide and invite them tactfully to become regular or extension division members; (3) arrange, in case it is an invalid or other shut-in, for a possible "sunshine" band to visit and sing for them.

When such persons do become identified with the Sabbath School, the secretary should assure that they are properly enrolled in a class or in the extension division and made to feel very much at home with the Sabbath School.

Processing Offerings

Varying types of Sabbath Schools may require diverse ways of processing Sabbath School offerings as illustrated in the following:

- A family Sabbath School, in an isolated section, sends its offerings to the conference office once a quarter.

- A Sabbath School conducted by a small company, where there is no church organization, may follow the plan of church treasurers and send the money to the conference office once a month. If convenient, the money may be placed in a bank and forwarded by check.

- In small Sabbath Schools the secretary may count the money and turn it over to the church treasurer on the day on which it is taken.

- In large Sabbath Schools extra care must be taken immediately to safeguard the money.

Recognizing these varying conditions, there are only a few general rules, and the officers of each Sabbath School, studying these, will be enabled to work out a practical plan of processing the offerings, approaching the ideal as nearly as possible. The following statements and instruction are applicable to a large proportion of Sabbath Schools:

Though a few larger Sabbath Schools have elected their own treasurer, the church treasurer usually serves as treasurer of the Sabbath School. All Sabbath School offerings and moneys are transferred to the treasurer by the secretary, who keeps a careful record of all offerings received.

The offering should, if possible, be turned over to the church treasurer on the day on which it is taken. This saves the secretary the responsibility of caring for the money during the week and ensures against accidental loss. As already stated, conditions vary so

widely that it is not possible to make rules to be followed in all cases, but some suggestions may be helpful.

- The money may be counted between the Sabbath School and church service, the secretary and the treasurer associating in this. If the school is so large that this deprives those who do the counting of a large share of the Sabbath School or any of the church service, it will be better to defer this until after the church service. In every case a receipt for the offering should be given by the church treasurer and carefully filed for record by the Sabbath School secretary.

- Whatever plan is followed in the passing of money and obtaining receipts, it is absolutely essential that the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, the Birthday-Thank Offering, and the Investment Fund money be noted and recorded separately. If this is not done, the Special Projects portion of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering cannot be computed accurately and allocated to the specific objectives, the Birthday-Thank Offering cannot be reported separately and the amount of the Investment Fund cannot be properly ascertained and the special projects portion allocated according to policy.

- The church treasurer should always forward the complete Sabbath School mission offering to the conference treasurer in time for the amount to be credited on the conference treasurer's books to the quarter in which it is given.

When the extension division envelopes and record cards come in at the end of the quarter, the offerings should be added to those already received from the school. Likewise, all mission offerings from Branch Sabbath Schools should be added and included in the quarterly report of the parent Sabbath School.

Expense Money

Sabbath School expense money is set aside in several ways. Some Sabbath Schools take up a weekly expense offering by passing an expense envelope to the class when the mission-offering envelope is passed. Still others pledge their members to a stated contribution, and then take it up weekly or monthly in the class.

In whatever way the expense money is collected, it should be passed on regularly to the church treasurer by the secretary, to be kept in a separate account, and is paid out for supplies ordered through the lay activities secretary or used to meet other legitimate Sabbath School expense, but only on an order authorized by the Sabbath School council. In many churches the Sabbath School expenses are included in the church budget, the amount expended

for supplies being authorized by the Sabbath School council.

Supplies

The secretary has the responsibility of looking after the supplies. These should be ordered through the church lay activities secretary. Accounts should always be settled promptly.

If a company of believers organize a Sabbath School and have as yet no church organization, the Sabbath School secretary may send orders for supplies directly to the Adventist Book Center, sending money with the order.

The secretary should monitor renewal needs of the Bible study guides and when to reorder Picture Rolls, Memory Verse Booklets, and all other supplies. As the council should authorize these expenditures, it may be necessary to remind the superintendent in time, so that orders may be sent at least a month before the supplies are to be used in Sabbath School.

The best way to handle the supplies that are needed each quarter by every school is to have the Adventist Book Center place standing orders for them with the publishers. The Bible Study Guides, the children's and youth's papers, the program helps, teaching aids, memory verse booklets, and the picture rolls may be handled to best advantage in this way. The size of the orders may be enlarged or reduced whenever desired, but if the order is made a standing one, supplies will be sent to each school on time every quarter without renewing. The new Bible Study Guides should always be distributed one or two Sabbaths before the new quarter.

Conference Sabbath School departments often provide class cards and other Sabbath School supplies. It would be well for the Sabbath School secretary to contact the local conference office to find out what is available and to request necessary materials. Great care should be taken to see that every kind of material provided for the Sabbath School is carefully preserved from dust and from being torn and wasted.

The Quarterly Report

Quarterly reports vary from conference to conference and field to field. It is best to contact local conference Sabbath School departments to find out what report they use and details in obtaining and reporting information. The secretary makes out the report, but in his or her absence it may be done by the assistant secretary or by someone appointed to do it.

The Assistant Secretary

If the secretary is absent, the assistant acts in his or her place. The latter should be ready to assist by doing whatever the superintendent or the secretary may direct. Assistant secretaries may help distribute and collect supplies and take notes in one of the divisions for the report of the Sabbath School. They should share in the responsibility of caring for the supplies and in keeping shelves and cases in order. In Sabbath Schools where there are several divisions the work should be so arranged that the assistants

bear specific responsibilities. If desired assistants may act as secretary of the teachers' meeting and report to the secretary any business, votes, or recommendations.

The secretary who knows beforehand that he or she will be away at the close of the quarter and will not be able to make out the report should notify the conference Sabbath School director early and give the name and address of the assistant secretary who will be responsible to submit the quarterly report.

