

How to Begin a Women's Ministries in the Local Church

Many women are interested in starting a Women's Ministries group but do not know where to begin. Some feel unqualified. The Lord has wonderful experiences in store as you lean on Him, becoming involved in a ministry which is best accomplished under His guidance.

Ask God to guide you

The first step is to pray. Pray for a burden for the women and how to meet their needs. Study God's Word and the Spirit of Prophecy for guidance. Talk to other Women's Ministries leaders. You may have only a few interested women at first, but as you allow the Lord to lead, others will want to become involved.

Next, get a group of women together to do preliminary planning. Be sure that the women on this committee are a cross section of women in your church, representing different age groups, ethnic groups, educational, and economic levels. It would be wise, as much as possible to also represent singles, divorced, disabled, etc.. You will then be modeling an inclusive ministry and be better able to meet real needs. If the pastor's wife wants to be involved, that is wonderful. But if her schedule will not allow her involvement, or her interests are elsewhere, ask her if she would like to serve as an advisor.

Prepare a survey

To help you determine the needs of your group, ask the women of the church to fill out a needs survey. Some of the questions that might be useful in a needs survey to help define your proposal are:

1. *As a Christian woman, what is your greatest personal need or area in which you would like to see yourself grow?*
2. *What are the three most prevalent needs you can identify in your closest non-Christian friend?*
3. *Thinking about the women of your church, what concern do you share for them, and which group of women do you believe need immediate attention? (i.e. mothers of preschoolers, single parents, working women, widows, etc.)*

4. *List three pressing needs or issues your community is facing. How could the Women's Ministries of your church help address these problems?*

When you have defined the needs of your congregation, you can put together a specific plan of action. The church board should authorize a planning committee. They should confirm the ministry leader and team, or depending on the time of year, these women might be selected by the nominating committee. This planning committee would then develop a proposal that includes a specific description of the program design, curriculum resources, budget, a starting date and other decisions necessary to begin your program. It is all right to start small and slowly build.

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:

- An intimate relationship with God
- Serving God, not self
- Devoted to prayer
- Committed to God and His Word

Positive personal qualities:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Integrity | • Serves others |
| • Thinks before acting | • Positive self-image |
| • Courage | • Motivates others |
| • Faces issues | • Teachable spirit |
| • Vision | • Delegates work |

Personal qualities to avoid:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Burnout | • Pettiness |
| • Sense of inadequacy | • Strong individualism |
| • Spiritual dryness | • Passivity |
| • Fear of failure | • Laziness |
| • Unloving attitudes | • Lack of emotional control |
| • Conflict with authorities | • Poor time management |
| • Critical spirit | • Over commitment |
| • Habitual lateness | • Compulsive talking |

Four wrong motivations for leadership:

- Pressure from others to become involved
- To receive prestige and admiration
- To fulfill a personal need for acceptance and approval
- To have power and authority over others

(Adapted from the *Women's Ministry Handbook*, Carol Porter and Mike Hamel, General Editors. Victor Books: Wheaton, Illinois, 1992.)

After the church board or nominating committee has chosen women for leadership positions, it would be appropriate to consecrate them to this position. Ask the pastor for a Sabbath when the new leader and her supporting committee could be brought to the front of the church for special prayer. This will benefit the new ministry in a number of ways. It introduces the group and the objectives of the group to the congregation. It shows the support and the linkage between this leader, the committee and the pastor. It gives the opportunity for the pastor to invite the blessing of the Lord on this new and important ministry.

Work with your pastor

It is wise to work closely with your pastor. During the early planning stages, talk to your pastor. You will need his or her support to be successful and he/she can give you valuable advice. Explain that Women's Ministries will support the pastor and spouse in their goals for the church family. Never "surprise" the pastor—keep him/her informed of your plans. It is important too that you plan your programs into the larger church calendar well in advance.

Identifying spiritual gifts

One of the goals of Women's Ministries is to help women identify and use their spiritual gifts. As soon as possible, help your leadership and the women to whom you minister find their gifts. One effective way is to work in small groups. Have each group draw a picture of a woman (stick figures are fine!). Then have each woman write her name beside the part of the drawing with which she identifies her gift. If she like to do things with her hands, she would write her name beside the hands. Perhaps she likes to go visit—identify the feet. Perhaps it is to preach; write beside the mouth. Ears to listen, heart to sympathize, and so forth. Then ask each lady to share why she feels this is a gift, and if time allows, how she has or would like to share this gift. You can also pre-prepare pictures of Christ and use that instead of a drawing of a woman—we can be the hands, ears, eyes, feet for Christ (see Section VII-26). As soon as practical, you may want to have a full Spiritual Gifts Seminar (see Section VII-22 to 26).

Target your ministries

There are generally three categories of programs: *to teach and disciple women, to nurture, and to evangelize*. Knowing which type you are planning will help you to plan successfully. From time to time plan some leadership training for your leaders and potential leaders also.

Determine priorities

You will doubtless want to do a survey of the women in your church to find what specific programs, classes and outreaches your group wants. Your survey should show where the real needs are in your church. Check carefully that your programming is meeting those needs. This is the formula of success that Jesus used in His ministry. He didn't minister to keep busy. He ministered to meet needs, real needs.

One nice way to do a survey is to roll the surveys up and tie them with a nice ribbon and then pass them out at the door of church. Collect them in the same basket after church. Do not let the women take them home; it is much too difficult to get them back! You may or may not want to have women sign their names. Once the survey is completed, select the most pressing need and develop a way to meet this need. Do one thing, and do it well, before you begin others. It will help you gain experience and win confidence.

Write effective goals

Women can easily be carried away with an exciting idea, such as starting Women's Ministries, but sometimes fail to set realistic goals. Your program will have more support and will be more successful if you set goals. Ask yourselves some questions:

- Is this program Christ centered?
- How many do we want to attend?
- What do we need to do to get this number?
- How many non-members do we want to attend?
- Who are we targeting?
- What is our primary goal?

Write out your goals. This will help you to see any missing links.

To be successful, goals must be **Specific, Attainable, and Measurable**. Programs cannot be hit-or-miss. Ask yourself:

- Are our goals specific?
- Are they attainable?
- Are we looking at pie-in-the-sky, or are we certain that with God's blessing our goals are attainable?
- Are they realistically something that our women and resources can handle?
- And finally, can we measure the success of our goals?

If you can answer each of these questions satisfactorily, you can be assured that you will build effective ministries in your local church.

It is always a good idea to evaluate your program after it is over. Did you achieve your goals? How can you improve your goals, and your program, next time? Go over each item in your plan to see what went well and what can be improved.

Develop the details

Some of the details to think about in planning a program are:

- Where?
- When?
- Time?
- Will childcare be provided?
- Who will provide childcare?
- Is the facility booked?
- Is the facility large enough?
- Are there chairs, tables, heat, etc.?
- How much will the program cost?
- How will the program be paid for?
- Do you have a budget for this program?

Church leaders respect a program that is organized. They are much more likely to give financial backing to a program that has been thoroughly and thoughtfully developed.

When planning the time for a program, carefully check that there are no competing programs or activities to detract from your attendance. Make sure that it is

a convenient time of day for your target audience. Young mothers will not want to come during children's meal or nap time and elderly women often do not want to go out after dark. Give the same kind of thought to where a meeting is to be held and to each concern.

When you have worked out the details, give all assignments in writing so that you have a paper trail that can serve as a reminder to you and the person who has accepted the assignment.

Determine resources

In planning a program, retreat, church service, or a simple tea, there are many resources that need to be assessed. It is a good idea to keep a file or notebook of possible resources. These would include speakers and chairpersons, sources of finance, materials such as books, pamphlets, videos or other educational materials, and retreat facilities. Your resources would also include facilities (especially necessary for retreats) and even transportation.

Contact your conference, union or division director for a list of current Women's Ministries books, handbooks, newsletters, videos, seminars or other resource material available. There are many excellent books on topics such as women in the Bible, self-esteem, small group prayer and Bible study, women's devotional books and much more.

Funding your program

This may seem to be one of the hardest obstacles to overcome. You may be fortunate to be in a church where the board will give you a liberal budget. Or you may have no money at all and you will have to be very creative. In either case you will need a budget. If you are inexperienced, ask one of the church treasurers to mentor you in planning a budget. Get prior approval for all expenditures! Plan carefully and early to avoid surprise costs. Keep receipts of all purchases and good records of all spending. And most important, keep within your budget or you may have to personally pay for expenses that you did not intend to pay. It will also give your ministry a good reputation if you're careful to stay within your budget.

As time passes and the value of Women's Ministries is proven and more appreciated, there should be money in every church budget for Women's Ministries. When your ministry is new in your church, you may not have the financial support that you would like. You may have to raise the money yourself. Women can cook. Women can bake. Women can put on musical programs. Women can have garage sales. And there are many other ways.

The more carefully planned and successful your programs are, and the more they can be seen as a benefit to the church, the more likely you will be to be able to get

funding from the church for future programming. Define the needs in your church so that you are meeting real, previously unmet, needs.

There may be some programs, retreats, times when food is served, or guest speakers come, for which you will want to charge or sell tickets. You will need to advertise well and build enthusiasm so women will want to come.

Advertise your programs

The best program will fail if people don't know it exists. And people in the advertising field say that you have to tell about something *five to seven times* for people to really be aware or remember something. So think of every possible method of informing that you have at your disposal. Of course you can use your church bulletin, newsletter, announcements, and bulletin boards. You can make posters and hand out fliers. If you want non-members to attend, you can use public service radio and TV announcements, newspaper stories or ads, also. Don't overlook inviting women's groups from other denominations; every program should be a way to reach your community! Be ready for other Christians and non-Christians and be careful to never give offense.

You will be most effective if you can get your whole congregation involved in promoting your program. Get the prayer bands praying for your program. Make certain that your pastors and literature evangelists have your yearly schedule. If they are aware of the programs planned for women, they can invite those they meet and visit. Get your telephone committees working. Make sure that your pastor has a nice supply of the fliers and that he is well-acquainted with all of your plans. Most importantly, encourage your church members to bring a friend.

In some countries women wear uniforms and some kind of a badge and they knock on doors in the community around the church and invite people personally to come to the meetings. In others they visit several times and give a fresh-cut flower with a personal invitation to come to their meeting. Be creative!

Minister to individuals

The purpose of Women's Ministries is to minister to the women of your church and to reach out to those who are non-members. People are encouraged and won one-to-one. Make certain that every individual is made welcome and comfortable at your programs. If you expect 30 non-members, make sure that you have at least 30 of your church women present to mingle with and befriend them. Plan to have someone sit with each guest and to begin to build relationships. And if men come, especially welcome them and make them comfortable! Women's Ministries is inclusive.

Disciple new members

As you attract new members to your church, have a plan to mentor them and to help them become comfortable with the Adventist lifestyle. In order for our ministry to be truly effective, we must disciple this new member until he/she becomes truly integrated into our church family. It would be helpful if there were a planned program to assign someone to each new person, especially if they do not already have a comfortable relationship with someone in the church. Invite them home for Sabbath dinner or afternoon activities. Help them to feel they belong, that they are no longer a visitor. Persons who work specifically with new converts say that it takes about 12 - 18 months to disciple a new member, so that they are also able to take on responsibilities and pass on what has been given to them. If the spouse has not been baptized, find some activities you can do with them so that he/she will be comfortable in joining their mate and the group.

Resources

The conference Women's Ministries director is responsible for providing resources for the local church leaders. The Women's Ministries director at the union level provides training seminars for Women's Ministries leaders, and the Women's Ministries director at the division level is available for organizational assistance, training meetings, encouragement, and resources. It is important for local leaders to attend basic training sessions sponsored by the local conference. Women's Ministries is committed to reaching the community, discipling people, and nurturing our members around the world.

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES LEADER : JOB DESCRIPTION

The leader is appointed by the church nominating committee and is a member of the church board (see Section III-8 for a full job description). 🍀

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When funds are low and debts are high,
When you want to smile but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit!

Author Unknown

A budget is, at best, simply an estimate as to the amount of money you think you will spend during a specific time period. Sometimes budgets must be revised during that time due to over-expenditures and/or unexpected needs that arise. The revision is to make adjustments from one account to another, still staying within the original budget.

Be reasonably generous with your budget, for committees usually reduce them, sometimes little and sometimes much. It's better to ask and not receive quite what you wish, than not to ask and receive much less.

In presenting your budget to the committee, do your homework and be able to show the basis on which you have come up with the numbers and amounts you are requesting.

Keep in mind that all levels of Women's Ministries, GC, divisions, unions, conferences, and local churches have the responsibility to use money wisely. Work closely with your administration.

Be sure to document in writing your activities and their results that have been apparent to so many in Women's Ministries meetings and retreats:

- (1) Women feel good about their church that provides just such opportunities.
- (2) Women are inviting friends who are lukewarm members to attend the meetings, and these friends are experiencing and responding, once again, spiritually and socially with the church.
- (3) Christian women's retreats and meetings are being a significant factor in women deciding for baptism and rebaptism.
- (4) Women are growing spiritually and in their witness in the community

And always thank the union or conference administration, in writing and verbally, for their support, interest and encouragement—no matter to what degree. ♡

Budgeting for Women's Ministries



SAMPLE BUDGET FORM (for local churches)
PROPOSED 200__ BUDGET for WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

EXPENSES **DATE** _____

OFFICE EXPENSE

Duplicating	\$ _____	
Postage	\$ _____	
Stationary	\$ _____	
Telephone	\$ _____	
Other	\$ _____	
TOTAL OFFICE EXPENSE		\$ _____

MEETINGS

____ Meeting(s) for Women		
Speaker's Fee	\$ _____	
Speaker's Transportation	\$ _____	
Speaker's Lodging	\$ _____	
Other	\$ _____	
Conference or Union-wide Meetings	\$ _____	
TOTAL MEETINGS EXPENSE		\$ _____

PROGRAMS

Advertising	\$ _____	
Program printing	\$ _____	
Gifts/handouts	\$ _____	
Refreshments	\$ _____	
Room rental	\$ _____	
Equipment rental or purchase	\$ _____	
Other	\$ _____	
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES		\$ _____

TRAVEL

Conference Spiritual Retreat	\$ _____	
TOTAL TRAVEL EXPENSE		\$ _____

TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST **\$ _____**

INCOME

Church budget	\$ _____	
Gifts/donations	\$ _____	
Fund Raising	\$ _____	
TOTAL INCOME		\$ _____

TOTAL NET INCOME **\$ _____**



Women's Ministries Interest Survey

What subjects would you like to see Women's Ministries address? We need your help to know how to develop our future programs to meet your needs. Please check all your interests and then prioritize the top four by putting numbers 1-4 alongside them, number 1 being your highest priority.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aging | <input type="checkbox"/> How to Live as a Divorcee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible Study Methods | <input type="checkbox"/> Women in Evangelism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-esteem | <input type="checkbox"/> How to Pray |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small Group Bible Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Christians | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating Disorders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> How to Mentor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Life-threatening Illness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression and Suicide | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Image |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teen Challenges | <input type="checkbox"/> Weight Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grief Recovery | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time Management | <input type="checkbox"/> How to serve on a Committee or Board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Growing up in a Family with Alcoholism, Abuse, and other Trauma | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How to Quit Addictive Habits | <input type="checkbox"/> How to Disciple Someone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How to be a Christian on the Job (tobacco, drinking, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Witnessing to a Non-believing Spouse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Role in the Church | <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer and Love Saves |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |



Women's Ministries Skills Survey

Please check all areas in which you would be comfortable sharing:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aids | <input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol and Drug | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biblical Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Abuse and Neglect | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Single Parenting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Soul Winning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death and Dying | <input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decision Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression and Suicide | <input type="checkbox"/> Stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diet and Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking Care of Me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching a Skill |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eating Disorders | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Roles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finances | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with teens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendship and Dating | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health | Other _____ |

Would you be available to serve as: Consultant Panelist Other

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Home Church _____

Occupation _____

(teacher, homemaker, physician, secretary, etc.)

If you have a degree, license or certificate in any of these areas specify here:
