ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO I AM SENDING YOU

AMBASSADORS

fostering a new generation of spiritual leaders

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AMBASSADORS

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ambassadors administrative manual
preface

At the 2001 World Youth Leadership Convention, division youth leaders noted that in many parts of the world young people who complete the Pathfinder requirements or who are of that age group are left without a program that meets their needs. They do not necessarily want to leave the Pathfinder club, but at the same time they do not feel old enough to associate themselves with young adults (approximately aged 22—30+).

In the absence of an established program/level for this group, several divisions had been running their own programs to fill this void such as Companion in Europe and Medical Brigade in the Inter-American and South American divisions.

An action was taken at the 2001 convention charging the General Conference Youth Ministries Department to develop materials for a new level of youth ministry to meet the need of the youth aged 16—21. For the purpose of differentiating this age group, the name Ambassador was chosen.

The Ambassador Ministry is not intended to replace the Senior Youth Ministry, formerly known as Adventist Youth Society (AYS), the umbrella organizational level of ministry for all youth aged 16—30+. The Ambassador level provides focused ministry for the 16-21 age group; it proposes a structured and organized way for them to become actively involved in their church, both locally and globally. This Ambassador manual introduces the first steps for preparing you to lead this "late adolescent" age group.

Great appreciation goes to the world divisions that have contributed to the material in this manual.

The Ambassador Age Group

The teen phase of development is unique to human beings. Only the human species has a distinct age group that goes through several years of transition from childhood to adulthood. In terms of human developmental stages, we are talking about the upper teens to about age 21, a stage known as "late adolescence."

There is no such thing as a typical teenager. Teens are as varied as the rest of the population. Each teen you meet is an individual with a personality and distinct preferences. Not all teenagers like technology or computers. Not all of them are obsessed with the opposite gender. Not all teens are possessed by rebellious thoughts and inclinations. They do have characteristics in common, but each one is a unique person.

Teens are as varied as the rest of the population

"Late adolescents" are in the discovery phase of life. They want to differentiate themselves from others and they want to be allowed to question things they don't understand.

Some teens have a great desire to know God and follow Him, while others are brought into the church environment and don't really want to be there. Some are not sure whether to bother with God and religion. Others have developed interests unrelated to God that occupy their minds already.

Individuals in this age group want to know authentic, trustworthy people. They want to hear their name spoken. They want to be smiled at even when they don't feel like smiling back. They especially want to feel that the adults in their lives think they are important and worth something.

The teenager thrives in an atmosphere of freedom to explore and grow within limits defined by caring and knowledgeable adults. This is your calling as a teen ministry leader: to grow healthy, God-knowing teens.

Prepare Yourself

The upper teen age group needs someone to lead, casting the way forward. They do not want or need someone to dictate, herd, lambaste, nitpick, or lecture. What teens need from you as their leader is someone who knows where they are going (to the Kingdom), genuinely lives the gospel, offers care and friendliness, listens without judging, is well prepared for meetings and events, knows Bible answers when called on, keeps Jesus in view at all times, has patience and a sense of humor about life, and can get the right help from elsewhere when it's needed.

No one is born with all of these gifts and skills. Most of them are learned. Possibly there will be a set of teenagers that you lean on. If you know the principles of this ministry beforehand, you will learn quickly. The young people will teach you.

What you'll end up learning is how to be a strong presence without pushing. You will know your objectives and minister by them, and you'll come to feel confident in God's guidance of your ministry to Ambassadors.

For more information or any query you might have relating to Ambassadors, please visit www.gcyouthministries.org.

SECTION 1
the basics of ambassador ministry

AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO I AM SENDING YOU

AMBASSADORS

Welcome to Ambassadors.

Ambassadors is a new level of youth ministry designed to equip leaders with resources to train a new generation of youths to be the hands, feet, and voice of Jesus in their local churches and communities.

An ambassador generally represents a country or a cause. A Christian ambassador is a representative of another kind; they represent the values, principles, culture, and laws of the kingdom of God. They stand for the character and purpose of the King of this kingdom—Jesus Christ, Himself.

This Youth Department resource is based on seven foundations that are considered as essential to meet the developmental needs of our young people between the ages of 16–21. They include:

1. A Christ-centered discipleship plan
2. Leadership development
3. A personal, public, and small group based mission lifestyle
4. Character and personality development, including outdoor, high adventure programming
5. Lifestyle and vocational training
6. Nurturing godly relationships
7. Community outreach development through service projects and emergency preparedness training

Each of these seven foundations will be presented in modules, with participants gaining certification for each module completed. While each module has a specific focus, there are FOUR elements that will be common throughout the curriculum. Leaders MUST ensure that all these elements are embraced to make the experience meaningful, attractive, and challenging.

- First, the concept of a spiritual companion. At the beginning of each module, each participant will choose a friend who will be their companion for the duration of the module. They will meet during each session to encourage and support each other in their role and growth as an Ambassador. Groups of spiritual companions will also come together for specific activities. This builds the concept of interdependence and accountability into the Ambassador experience.

- Second, an Individual Discipleship Plan (IDP). At the beginning of every module, each participant will make a simple plan of how they would like to grow spiritually and acquire practical competency in the area of the upcoming module. Their spiritual companion will be there throughout the module to help and encourage them to accomplish their plan. The IDP helps to emphasize the continuing nature of discipleship and that learning is a continual part of life. By linking spiritual companions together for this work, it stresses the need for interdependence on each other as we learn, grow, and work for God. Guidelines for creating the IDP will appear in the Leader's Guide and Participant's Guide for each module.

- Third, projects. Each module will have a project that will integrate the core concepts from the module into a service learning activity focused on helping others. This will be an opportunity for the Ambassador class to work together as a whole. You will find INSTRUCTIONS for setting up your project in the back pages of the Leader's Guide for each module.

You might have to plan for multiple projects, depending on the size of your group. The main objective is to incorporate service as a way of life, rather than an occasional activity.

- Aim for projects that would call for regular involvement over a period of time.
- Make contact with your volunteer service organizations, the local council, and other entities that could assist you.
- If your group settles on a particular medium/long term project, there is no need to change the project when the time comes to engage with a new module. Use your discretion.

- Fourth, social activities. Ensure that you plan for a social activity at least once a month. Make sure that you always provide opportunities for good and wholesome fun for that age group. You do not have to conduct all your sessions in a building. As appropriate, conduct some in nature, in the context of a camp, in someone's home, etc.

In the back pages of the Leader's Guide you will find a list of websites where you can access 'Ice Breakers' or brief fun activities that you can inject into all your sessions.

Of course, CONDUCT ALL YOUR ACTIVITIES PRAYERFULLY.

RECOMMENDATION

It is highly recommended that you set aside your first meeting as a fun ORIENTATION to share the Ambassadors concept, share the Participant's Guide, give an overview of the first module, discuss the FOUR elements and their implementation, discuss the frequency of meetings, organize calendars, etc.

Participant's Guide

A participant's guide for each module has been prepared for each participant.

The Participant's Guide is essentially the workbook containing all the sessions of each module that the participant will engage with.

In the back pages of each module there is a page for creating the IDP. There is also a list of the sessions for that module that the leader will date and sign upon the participant's completion.

Each participant will be required to complete 75 percent attendance and participation to receive the certification or award at the end of each module. Participants can make-up for missed lessons to achieve the required 75 percent at the discretion of their leader.

Fostering togetherness is at the heart of a model for discipleship, which the General Conference is focusing on; it is known as "Together Growing Fruitful Disciples." This model emphasizes understanding, connecting, equipping, and ministering—but doing all of this "together." For God did not design us to grow or minister alone, but in community. Paul writes that growing in Christ is achieved as everyone uses the gifts God has given to them, "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Thank you for helping to educate our young people to become Ambassadors of Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

General Conference Youth Ministries Department

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the basics of ambassador ministry
section 1

membership

"Late adolescents" who come to church are a varied lot. Most of them likely come from Seventh-day Adventist families and are familiar with the basic concepts of salvation, church, and living in harmony with God. Some have come up through Sabbath school and Pathfinders. You can't assume, however, that all the teens who show up have such a background. Some have met God personally and committed their lives to Him, while others are still searching and making up their minds.

The Ambassador program is a discipleship program for the late adolescents in the local church. Be sure to seek out and invite all the teens in the 16—21 age group that you can find in your church. Make them all feel welcome. The program is entirely for their benefit.

Young people who have completed Pathfinders have two options: (1) they can immediately choose to specialize in leadership by opting for either the Adventist Youth Leadership or Master Guide program, or (2) join the Ambassador group. Teens who have not gone through Pathfinders may join either Ambassadors or AY Leadership.

Those who engage in the Ambassador program can be encouraged to embark on the specialized leadership training (Master Guide or AY Leadership) at any time, but preferably after completing an entire module of learning. Similarly, those who complete Master Guide and AY Leadership can be prompted to join the Ambassador group.

logo

The cross in the logo points to the fact that Jesus' sacrifice is the center of a relationship with Him. The cross on the earth is symbolic of His sacrifice, giving us hope of a new and better life both here on earth through the concept of servant leadership and through an earth made new at His return. The open book is the Word of God, the foundation for our faith, knowledge, and lifestyle. It is open because it's a message for us to internalize as our constant guide and companion. It is also for sharing with all who will freely receive it. The graded colors of yellow to orange represent the dawn of eternal life that follows the darkness of our temporal experience on this sinful earth.

flag

aim and motto

The Advent Message to All the World in My Generation

My relationship to Jesus Christ is of such a nature that it compels me to share the gospel with any who will receive it—the good news of salvation and Jesus' soon return.

The Love of Christ Compels Me

I am drawn to Him by His exemplary life, the symbolic act of His crucifixion, His conquering resurrection, and His promise of an earth made new in the pattern of the original creation. The closer I get to Him, the closer I find myself identifying with the needs of my fellow human beings.

mission statement

The mission of Seventh-day Adventist youth ministry is to lead young people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and help them embrace His call to discipleship.

In the model of youth ministry outlined in re-Visioning Youth Ministries (see http://www.gcyouthministries.org/Ministries/AYModel/tabid/325/Default.aspx), Jesus is the center of all youth ministry as He is the center of all aspects of church life. His life on earth informs us of the three foundational aspects of Christian living, namely discipleship (spirituality), church community, and mission. The Ambassador program is dedicated to nurturing, training, and equipping young people in all three types of ministry.

The Ambassador Purpose Statement:

The Ambassador group is an organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church dedicated to meeting the spiritual, social, and lifestyle needs of youth ages 16-21 by challenging them to experience and share a personal relationship with Christ, developing a lifestyle fitting their belief system and vocational interest, and providing them with an adequate venue for wholesome development of lifelong friendships.

philosophy

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church we are committed to understanding our teen youth and training them for discipleship, leadership, and service to humanity.

The Ambassador ministry is not an extension of the Pathfinder Club; it has a different programmatic format. It does not incorporate the same emblems and devices as used by the Pathfinder Club except that divisions of the world field may choose to get involved in honors or class levels appropriate for the age group.

The Ambassador ministry is also not a general Senior Youth meeting, nor does it necessarily fulfill the role of Senior Youth, which provides a balanced ministry program for the 16—30+ age group within the church community, and it is generally led by youth.

The Ambassador program exists primarily to provide upper teens with an organized system that will promote their active involvement in the church (both locally and globally) as well as their community while providing them with opportunities to discover their God-given talents and life vocation.

The particular focus of a local group should be determined by the leader and the local leadership team in consultation with the teens wishing to participate. The overall goals and mission of the organization must be kept in the process.

The focus may vary during any given program year, and it may develop and change over several years based on cycles of training and the arrival of new teens.

ten objectives

To ensure that your ministry brings "late adolescents" into a fulfilling walk with God and their rightful place in the church, consider the following objectives as you explore and develop the program.

1. Make the number-one priority of your Ambassador programming to be the personal salvation of each and every teen who is a member.
2. Encourage teens to discover their God-given talents and to use their gifts and abilities to fulfill God's expectations for them.
3. Teach the teens to internalize God's love and His principles so that they will take responsibility for their walk with God and use His principles and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to make wise decisions in their lives.
4. Help teens to realize that God and His church love them and appreciate the implementation of their talents for the fulfilling of the gospel commission as established in Matt. 28:18—20 and Acts 1:8. Help them find fulfillment in their life with God as they share their beliefs with those whom God brings to them.

5. Teach an understanding and love for God's creation through programs of adventure and discovery. The young people will find their fellowship with God to be more meaningful as they have the opportunity to experience that sense of wonder and worship as nature unfolds its deepest spiritual secrets as described in Romans 1:19, 20.
6. Inspire the teens to give personal expression of their love for God by teaching them how to be involved in various outreach activities.
7. Teach the teens specific vocational skills and hobbies that will provide them with purpose and employment opportunities.
8. Encourage the young people to develop and maintain physical fitness through an active, energetic, drug-free lifestyle.
9. Provide them with opportunities to develop and demonstrate their leadership abilities. They will strengthen their resolve to learn and maintain appropriate internal discipline and apply their skills of resourcefulness and understanding of the processes of group dynamics.
10. Provide ample opportunities for teens to interact in carefully supervised activities that will lead to and strengthen life-long committed relationships.

seven program foundations

What should the ministry to Ambassadors consist of? Assuming that the group is a destination for teens in need of spiritual and life discipleship, the following areas of concentration, among others, will meet the ministry's objectives:

1. A Christ-centered discipleship plan
2. Leadership development through such curricula as Master Guide and AY Leadership
3. A personal, small-group based, and public evangelistic mission lifestyle
4. Character and personality development/awareness through outdoor/high adventure programming
5. Lifestyle vocational/career development through specialized training and advanced honor levels
6. Friendship and relationship skill development
7. Community outreach development through service projects and emergency preparedness training

See the Programming and Scheduling section for more ideas on which directions your ministry could take.

SECTION 2
understanding the "late adolescent"

understanding the "late adolescent"
section 2

developmental stages

The field of developmental psychology distinguishes between middle adolescence (ages 15—17) and late adolescence (18—21). However, the latter stage is simply an advancing of the development that began in the earlier stage rather than a radical change. Here we will examine some of the characteristics of late adolescents that begin in the mid-teens and come to full fruition as the young person hits their twenties.

The stereotypical view of the teen years is that they are "difficult." This is an unfortunate and misleading concept of a life stage that can be interesting and fun. It's true that in the mid-teens a young person may have increased conflict with parents and other adults because they have begun to embrace their own sense of being in the world. Some teens feel that they have to actively wrestle their place and identity from people around them (the turbulent ones), while others may act with passive aggression as they differentiate themselves (the sullen ones). The adults in a teenager's life can help this process of identity differentiation by being a steady and loving presence and keeping to healthy boundaries while offering reassurance and open communication.

The youngest teens in the Ambassador age group are a mix of seemingly contradictory characteristics. They are very sensitive and have strong reactions to hurt, insult, and unfairness. They may feel invincible and indestructible. Some of them have found a sense of self-confidence while others have very little. As they learn about the world around them, middle adolescents may show flashes of wisdom and common sense mixed with impulsive and/or risky behavior and unwise choices. Teens whose parents taught them in earlier years to think about the consequences of their decisions have an advantage at this stage.

From middle adolescence on, teens have increasing capacity for abstract thought and a broadening sense of the issues in the world. It's not surprising that the teen years are known as a time of questioning. Ideas and expectations they accepted without question in early adolescence are now up for argument. For many adults, this looks like arrogance or rebellion, but it is not necessarily so. As the "new people on the scene," teenagers aren't conscious that others have gone before them, so revelations about our conflict-filled world look brand new to them. Faced with resolving several identity-related tasks at once, teens are likely to come across as brutally honest about problems and as challenging to authority that seems to them to have decreasing legitimacy. They want the "truth" and need things honestly explained and proven.

Physically, middle adolescents may go through a growth spurt. Some of them don't reach full height and physical maturity until after high school. A sense of the physical self emerges, both of muscularity and

personal appearance, and concern about their appearance becomes prominent.

Social life is key for teens and the source of both stress and happiness. Cliques and best friends become a haven for security and familiarity. Regardless of the wishes and constraints of parents and others, many middle and upper teens begin to pair up and enter one-on-one male/female relationships. Sexuality becomes a force to be reckoned with. School is the central focus for much of this socialization, and it is the environment for many of the biggest issues in a teen's life.

Even though this age group is striving for a sense of personal identity, teens often follow the herd (a.k.a. peer pressure) and are influenced by popular opinion. They can be susceptible to influence by celebrities and celebrity culture in such areas as lifestyle choices and personal values. For some of them, music and clothes become a way of trying on identities. They may take on and slough off a series of values and ideas. Don't look for consistency but rather a growing maturity as teens move into late adolescence.

Over the years of adolescence, teens become conscious of money, work, and a nascent sense of calling. Some will get their first jobs, and you may even find teens who want to drop out of school. Practical advice offered in a non-judgmental way often helps them steer through this transitional stage. Even if teens don't seem to be looking for guidance, and perhaps seem to push it away, they will indeed take in much of the counsel adults offer them. The fruit of it may appear later.

Spiritually, the teen age group is almost always on a search for a path that is credible and makes sense. What role will God play in their lives? That is the big question for them. As you may have experienced, teens can spot insincerity, inconsistency, and hypocrisy a mile away. The ideals Jesus gave us become real to them, and even if they are too respectful to bring it up, many want to know why the adults around them don't measure up. Coming to terms with our sinfulness and God's forgiveness is a big need for them and may be a significant part of your spiritual discussion and their learning.

Late adolescents have reached a fairly stable, if incomplete, sense of themselves, with a roughed-out set of values. Given the right opportunities, they are capable of intelligent and balanced exploration of new ideas and of taking on a mature sense of responsibility. With training, they can develop the ability to lead others into what is good and right and true.

character versus personality

Pick any story about a person in the Bible and you'll see God working out His purposes in that individual's life. For those who were converted and faithful to God, the purpose was to educate and grow and refine their character in preparation for living in the kingdom of God.

In the twentieth century, personality rather than character became the focus of both scholarship and popular thinking about human development as new psychological awareness spread across cultures around

the world. When we look at a recent review of the literature written over the past two hundred years that deals with success, it is interesting to note a clear trend. For the first one hundred and fifty years, success is defined in terms of such qualities as "integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, simplicity, modesty, and the golden rule." In other words, success was defined by positive character traits. However, during the past fifty years there has been a clear shift from a character ethic focus to what is called a personality ethic. The personality ethic concentrates on public image and a positive mental attitude (Tom Osborne, *On Solid Ground*).

There is danger for young people today in not being taught and trained in the character traits God created. These character traits are some of the absolutes that we become convicted about when we accept God's way for us. They are the true focus of God's work in us.

Hand in hand with this change in society's thinking is the cultural shift into situational ethics and moral relativism. The default position in the minds of many people today is that beliefs and convictions are the subjective decision of each individual, and that moral and ethical decisions should be dictated by the situation rather than the unchanging principles of God. The idea that God gives absolute truths that always apply is irrelevant to the mind of a moral relativist. Even among some Christians, this idea has taken root. This is completely contrary to the unchanging, eternal reality of God's perfect principles.

The teens born near the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first grew up in a world in which human beings assume the responsibility for making a moral framework that belongs to God alone. Until recently, society assumed certain things to be always wrong, even if many were violating the principle involved. Today, the assumption that there is anything that's truly wrong has largely faded away. No youth leader should be surprised that late adolescents, even the ones who grew up in the church, have this non-biblical outlook and have to be shown that some things are always wrong.

The well-known thought from the book *Education* by Ellen G. White applies to the leaders of Ambassador ministry today: "The greatest want of the world is the want of men [and women] . . . who will not be bought or sold, . . . who in their inmost souls are true and honest, . . . who do not fear to call sin by its right name, . . . whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, . . . who will stand for the right though the heavens fall" (57).

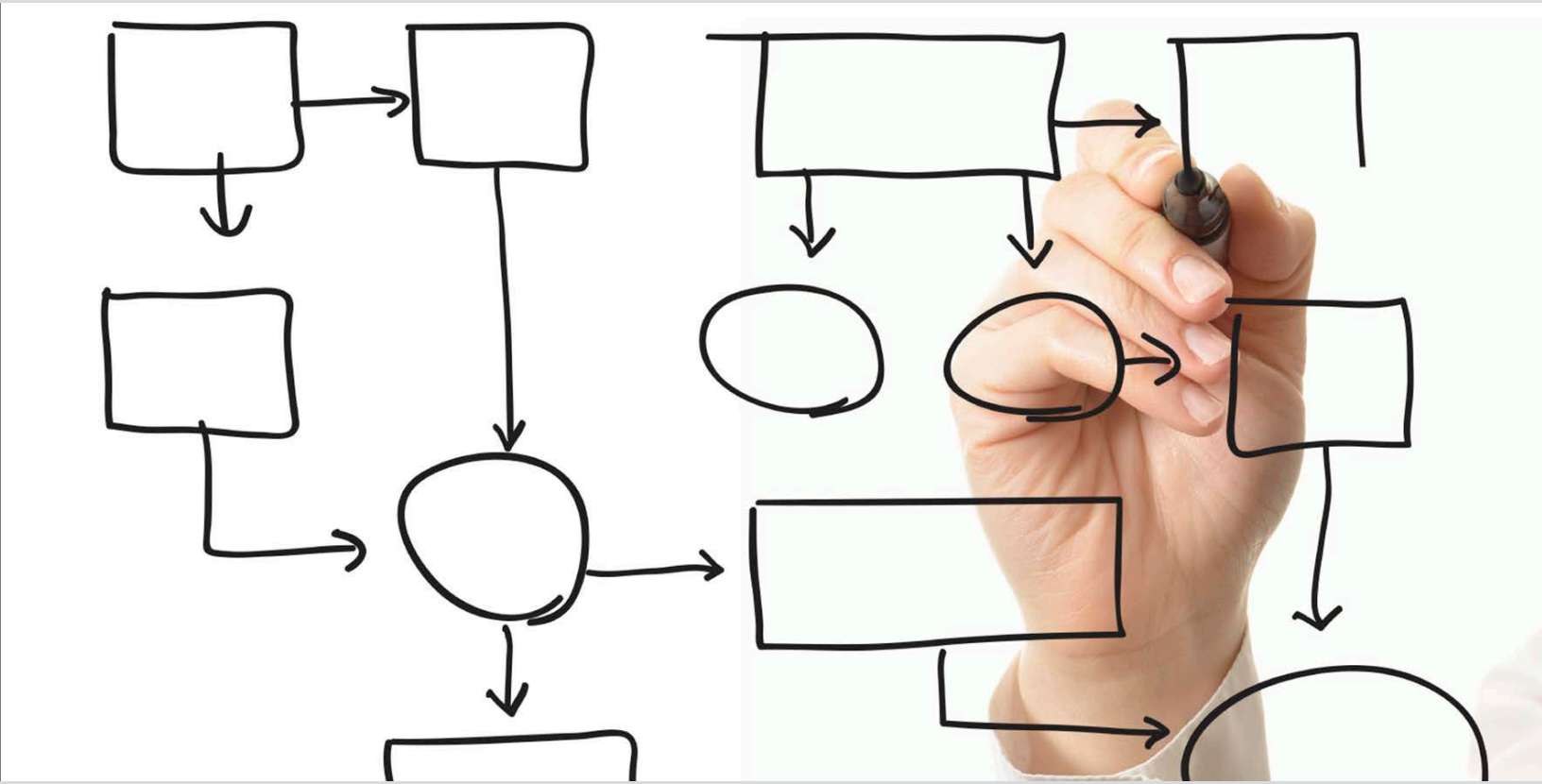
discipline

The ages involved in the Ambassador category include those who are considered under-age in some settings, along with young adults who can be expected to take full responsibility for their actions. The expectation is that all of the Ambassadors will function with self-discipline. Such may not always be the case. You may have sixteen-year-olds who think they are twenty-five, and occasionally you'll have an older young adult who is not willing to live up to the average level of maturity in their age group.

So how does a leader set manageable rules that will be respected and enable the organization to function smoothly? A leader must set expectations early on, while not being heavy-handed. "A few simple rules" is a good place to start. The golden rule works well, as does an agreement to love everyone and build them up. You might draw up a short list of principles from God's Word that you present to the group as the compass for the journey ahead. Bring up basic rules again when the group is doing an activity or taking a trip as a reminder that they are Ambassadors for the King of heaven.

Every leader will confront situations of poor decision-making and bad behavior on the part of one or more in the group. The leader must pray and have some idea of what to require of the young person. They must call attention to the problem, talking to the individual alone in a calm, polite manner, and offer a solution that must be followed through. It will involve a change of direction and possibly punishment. Each person should be treated as fully responsible for their actions. That is life in the real world.

SECTION 3
organizing an ambassador group/ club



organizing an ambassador group/club
section 3

preparing yourself

You are entering ministry for late adolescents because you have a God-given desire to do so. Before you proceed with the organization of the group, take the following steps of self-preparation.

First, spend time in prayer to God, asking for Him to confirm your calling. Take some days to examine your own spiritual state and invite the Holy Spirit to reveal anything you need to see. What have been your spiritual challenges? How is your faith these days? Is it time for a clean-up or a rededication of your life to our Creator? Surrender yourself to God and to His leading. Allow God to remove barriers between you and Him.

Along with speaking to God, take time to listen. God is all-knowing and wise far beyond our comprehension. He wants us to allow Him to lead in the best paths for our ministry, but He cannot lead if we're not listening. Allow Him to influence your thinking and your actions.

When working with young people, you need the confidence that comes from knowing you've put God in charge. "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans" (Proverbs 16:3). If you proceed in your own confidence and counsel, it's only a matter of time before you make a mistake that could have been avoided. No doubt you will meet challenges and things will go wrong sometimes, but when you've put God in charge, He is the One who will solve the difficulties.

A last helpful step in preparing yourself is to look carefully at your motives and your level of preparedness to do the ministry. Does the salvation and discipleship of young people drive your desire to lead in Ambassador ministry? How experienced are you in working with youth? Do you need training? Do you need help? These are available. Be honest in your assessment.

draw up initial plans

In whichever way you prefer to do it, draw up some basic plans. The vision for the Ambassador group starts with you. Write down specific goals based on the suggestions in Section 1, brainstorm some activities for each of them, and list possibilities such as a place and time to meet and a tentative schedule for the first year.

Write up a budget for materials, transportation, entrance fees, and other expenses. Investigate sources of funding.

Begin to pray and talk with potential co-leaders. Two things will determine your success in Ambassador ministry: God's guidance, and a vibrant, competent leadership team.

who to counsel with

If you have a conference/field/mission youth director in your territory, show him or her your tentative plans and ask about the resources available to you. Think of your Ambassador group as an exercise in collaboration and the youth director as a board member who can help you with vision and implementation. It's good advice for free. Take advantage of it. Remember to go to the meeting with an open mind, ready to learn.

Around the same time, ask your pastor and possibly the church elder to meet with you. The primary goal is to seek and hopefully obtain your pastor's support and encouragement to proceed with the Ambassador group. Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance before the meeting, and then present your plan. Many pastors are overworked and spread too thin, and there is no way to predict what response you will get. But listen carefully and act in a Christ-like way no matter what happens. Before the meeting is over, ask for a promise of support.

You will need to figure out who to ask about a regular meeting place. Typically the place you would want to use is within your church's facilities. The chair of the church board is a good person to talk with first. If you're planning to use a Sabbath school room as your meeting place, talk to the Sabbath school leader about a class location.

You are probably adding a new group to the roster of ministries in your congregation. Aim to become a complement to the ones already going. Among the people to share your plans with are the current Pathfinder and teen Sabbath school leaders so that they know to send their youth to your ministry as the young people reach the right age. It's also time to reach out to the parents of late adolescents in your church with an outline of your plans so they can be a voice of encouragement to their children when the group launches.

After you have adequate support from the leaders and interested parties around you, bring your formal plan to the church board for approval. Again, this is an opportunity to listen for counsel about how best to proceed. Ask the board to approve you as leader of the group if that is your plan. Further, ask board members to appoint someone (usually one of the board of elders) to be a representative for you and a liaison between church leadership and the Ambassador group.

getting ready to launch

Choose an executive committee that will create plans and be responsible for making them happen. The committee should consist of four to six leaders and assistants. A larger group becomes unwieldy. It's wise to make the committee meetings open so that all who are involved in running the group have an opportunity to contribute ideas and counsel. Invite your pastor to attend whenever he or she can do so. Be sure to include in your committee roster the representative chosen by the church board. (See the "Leadership and Structure" section below for how to set up a solid leadership group.)

Take a census of late adolescents in your church. Look at the membership list for upper high school students and college students. Be sure to find those who have finished school and already begun work. Put out the word that you are beginning an Ambassador group and ask the congregation to suggest names.

With your executive committee, set a launch date.

The committee can now set up a calendar of meetings and activities. It's time to research and purchase study materials, make transportation plans for field trips, and assign responsibilities to the group's leaders.

As the launch date approaches, prepare your publicity plans. Young people will come to the Ambassador group if notice of the new group is spread wide and deep. Here are some steps to take:

1. Make one or two formal announcements to your congregation on a Sabbath morning close to the launch date.
2. Brief your church's leaders on the plans you have in place and ask them to spread the word.
3. Issue an invitation. Choose several methods of contacting young people in the target age group such as a face-to-face conversation, a letter, an email, a Facebook page invitation, and phone calls. A personal invitation to each young person is the most effective.
4. Create and print posters, brochures, business cards, bookmarks or other publicity items that convey the basic details of the new Ambassador group.

about finances

In many parts of the world, a ministry group like Ambassadors will have to be mostly self-financed through fundraising. Several models can be considered. Note that your budget must be set up first of all so you have something to aim for.

The first source of funds is the local church. The church board might allocate operating-budget money to youth groups. It may also allow the Ambassador group to ask the church for offerings and donations. Families of the young people may be especially willing to contribute on a regular basis. You can set a participation fee for the young people themselves, or they could be presented with the invitation to give as they are able to partially support the program.

In some territories of the world, the local conference/field/mission may have funds designated to subsidize youth ministry. Be sure to ask your regional youth director.

As the Ambassador group becomes involved in community projects and volunteer work, its profile will rise in the community. You as the leader can then consider presenting proposals to civic organizations and local businesses, asking that they financially support the youth in specific projects. This will require that

you create formal advertising materials that define the Ambassador group and how it helps young people to benefit the community.

Recreational activities may have an entrance fee. The executive committee should prayerfully choose activities that meet the objectives of the group and then decide how much to subsidize the activity and how much of the fee might be charged to the young people. A careful balance should be struck between, on the one hand, too much subsidy that cuts down on a sense of investment among the youth, and, on the other, too high a cost barrier for some participants.

If you engage in fundraising projects, keep the following in mind:

1. Bring every project to the church board for approval.
2. If you sell something, make sure it is in harmony with the Bible, the identity of the church, and local ordinances.
3. Make sure that projects or products give consumers their money's worth. Church fundraising should not come across as confidence tricks or fraud. Don't use anything that looks like gambling.
4. Check to see if your project might be encroaching on similar activities of other ministries in the church. Find types of projects that are yours alone.
5. Make every effort to conduct projects that do not take away employment from adults in the community who need it.
6. Be sure to present a financial report of the Ambassador group to the church board on an agreed-upon schedule, but no less than once a year.

insurance

Your church should have liability insurance, but you should ask the board chair to explain what insurance the church has and what it covers. Depending on the country or region you live in, you may have to include insurance in your budget to cover specific types of activities, transportation issues, and other contingencies. Err on the side of caution with insurance. Pay a visit to the conference/field/mission treasurer for advice. Make sure your group is broadly covered.

Remember also that having insurance does not mean you should not be careful about safety. At all times, temper the desire to provide challenges and character growth with the thought that you must safeguard your teens and make sure they come home alive and uninjured.

leadership and structure

Assign specific roles to leaders so that responsibilities are clear.

1. Sponsor. This person is appointed by the church board as the elder or church leader who acts as an advocate and adviser for the Ambassador group. While the group director will likely make presentations to the board, Ambassadors will benefit from having a leader who is familiar with what the group is doing and advocates for it.
2. Director/group leader. This person is elected by the church board. He or she is responsible for all club doings and accountable to the church board. The person should be someone who has shown a high degree of maturity and proper financial management skills as well as a high degree of interest in the youth of the church. It is recommended that this person also be a member of the church board.
3. Assistant director/group leader. This person may be elected by the church board or chosen by the director in consultation with the church pastor or elder. He or she must have the same characteristics as the director and will substitute for the director whenever necessary.
4. Sub-committee chairs. The following groups may benefit from a leader for each of them. The divisions of labor may be lumped together or split further, depending on the size and scale of the Ambassador group and availability of volunteers.
    - Social
    - Outreach
    - Music
    - Recreation

Note that there is not a separate sub-committee or leader for spiritual matters. The Bible and God's principles should be infused in every category of activity in Ambassador ministry.

uniforms

There is no uniform globally recognized for the club. The Ambassador logo, pin, and a light blue scarf are the generic identifying insignias of the club. There has been some evolution in the recommendations made to clubs or conferences that opt for an unofficial uniform. When this manual was first released in 2006, the recommendation was for a light blue dress polo shirt with the emblem on or above the left pocket area. In 2007, this arrangement was changed to a brown polo shirt and khaki pants for men and khaki skirt for women. In 2011, it was further recommended that divisions and unions that choose to wear uniforms adopt the model in the manual but that the color be left to their discretion. A sash or vest can be worn for the placement of pins, honor badges, special event patches, and related items.

The Youth Leadership pin may be worn by anyone who has completed the proper requirements and been invested. The light blue club scarf with the logo imprinted will be worn by all other club members if so

determined by your division youth department.

In many countries the wearing of camouflage denotes military or subversive use. To protect the church organization and its existence in these countries, military or camouflage clothing is not appropriate at any time. This includes the use of combat boots, blousing of pant legs, and use of any weapons or weapon-resembling substitutes. Anything that may be interpreted by governments as indicating a paramilitary organization should not be worn.

keeping records

You will likely need to have teens register for the group so that you have basic contact information. The form on the next page is an example of such a registration. You can create your own to fit your needs. An online form is a good option.

You must keep attendance, involvement, and completion records for all participants at all events. Attendance records should be tallied and included in your reporting to both the executive committee and the church at large.

Just as important is that you keep complete records on the completion of modules by every participant. It is not the participants' responsibility. The best practice is to create a folder, binder, or computer spreadsheet in which you record the progress of each participant. Besides being important for reporting on the progress of the Ambassador group, your records will be key evidence for such things as requests for a job recommendation or personal reference, admission to leadership training of various kinds, and proof of completion of classes.

keep it going

Once you are launched and the group is underway, you should be aware of some ways to keep the momentum going.

Spiritual objectives are the highest priority in your program. In all of your detailed planning, start with the spiritual goal and make sure that any activity serves the goal.

The entertainment options for young people are endless, and the Ambassador group serves to shine the light of God in their lives. Avoid offering entertainment for its own sake.

Hold regular executive committee meetings no less than bi-monthly. Besides giving the chance to plan upcoming activities, the meeting is an opportunity to do a spiritual check-up on yourself and the other leaders. How you model the character and ways of Jesus is even more important than any creative program.

Also in the meeting, review what has already been done; evaluate the effect of the group on the young people, discuss challenges and changes, and thank leaders and helpers for their work. Review the overall

balance of the year's activities, making sure all your objectives are represented. Personal preference for certain types of activities should not be allowed to sway the program.

Inbetween meetings, take time to ask individual teens how they are doing and how the group is working out for them. Make a point of asking about their lives so that you are familiar with the basics of each one's situation. Give them assurance that they can be honest and that you value their input. Ask them to help you with creating and planning activities.

Be aware of the transitory nature of life for upper teens. You may want consistent participation, but as teens enter young adulthood they are pulled by school and work and life activities that will cause them to come and go. Welcome them at every opportunity, but avoid putting too much pressure on them. You can pray constantly that the Holy Spirit will draw the young people to the group. Your consistent, positive ministry will provide them with a spiritual anchor in their lives.

Publicity is extremely important for momentum. Inform group members and the church at large constantly! Do it much more than you think is necessary.

1. Use several means of communication to announce upcoming Ambassador events. Send two or three announcements a couple of weeks apart, with the second or third announcement a day or two beforehand. Share the announcements with the group members, all leaders and helpers, and church leadership.
2. Use personal conversation as part of your publicity. Talk to individual teens about planned events, make phone calls to key communicators in the group, and keep the pastor and other leaders informed once in a while. All leaders and helpers should be made completely and constantly aware of the group's plans.
3. Make a report to the congregation on a scheduled basis. Options to consider are making a short report at announcement time during the church service; creating a short newsletter that describes recent activities and includes quotes from participants; issuing a short written report to be included in a church newsletter or email distribution; posting group news to your church's website or a social media web page.
4. Once a year, write (or delegate to a writer) an article about the Ambassador group to be submitted to the church's regional news publication. Include some photos of activities and events.

use of Pathfinder/AY classes and honors

The classes and honors are primarily directed to the Pathfinder Club age group (10—15), however, in the past they have been used by all from the age of ten up through adulthood. This may remain in effect, as time allows. Priority should be given to the completion of the curriculum. Whenever honors are pursued within the Ambassador ministry, the focus and reasoning behind the use of these tools will be different from that of Pathfinder clubs.

Here, participation is more than just to open up windows of discovery and adventure; it implies development of leadership abilities—the capacity to teach those who are younger. Therefore, if you incorporate classes and honors into your program, you should emphasize completion of the advanced levels.

Awards and certification

All those who register for the Ambassador group are entitled to receive a patch and a special pin. A certificate has been developed for each one of the seven modules, which will be given out at the successful completion of each module.. A special graduation pin will be awarded at the completion of the seven modules. Young adults need to be affirmed.

ambassador club

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Birth date _____ Sex ❑ M ❑ F Baptized SDA ❑ Y ❑ N

Phone _____ Email _____

I would like to join Ambassador at the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church. I will attend and actively participate in the club and agree to live by the guidelines and rules established by the club in keeping with the lifestyle taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I have been a member of other SDA youth organizations. ❑ Y ❑ N If yes, which?

_____ Adventurers _____ Pathfinders _____ Master Guide

_____ Youth Federation _____ Youth Emergency Service _____ Search and Rescue

_____ Adventist Youth Society Other: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

SECTION 4
programs and scheduling

the seven foundations

Let's revisit the seven foundations of the Ambassador ministry:

1. A Christ-centered discipleship plan
2. Leadership development through such curricula as Master Guide and AY Leadership
3. A personal, small-group based, and public evangelistic mission lifestyle
4. Character and personality development/awareness through outdoor/high adventure programming
5. Lifestyle vocational/career development through specialized training and advanced honor levels
6. Friendship and relationship skill development
7. Community outreach development through service projects and emergency preparedness training

Regular attendance meetings should take place at least twice a month, and preferably once a week. It should be noted that there is a camping trip and some vocational activities that do not fit into regularly scheduled meetings.

philosophy of ambassador activities

You can promise young people a rich life through knowing Jesus. It's not a hollow promise. Jesus said, "I come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). A boring life lengthened by proper health habits is not an abundant life. Having said that, we are also not here to be happy because life is easy, life is fair, and life is long. None of those phrases are accurate for anyone—a Christian or a non-Christian. James tells us we can and should be happy regardless of circumstances. Paul understood this as well, which is why he could sing after being beaten or thrown in prison. This may sound a bit morbid, but here's the reason: today's society places a major emphasis on having fun—at almost any cost. Entertainment is the way to happiness, says the mindset of the world today. It is one of Satan's cleverest lies.

Jeff Jacoby, a columnist for a major newspaper, was evaluating this concept when he wrote the following:

"It is not that movies and TV shows are laced with dung, but that they cannot help being laced with dung. So much TV and movie fare is morally corrosive because those industries by their nature are at odds with traditional moral teachings. . . . [They] contradict the fundamental messages of the Judeo-Christian tradition."

He goes on to point out many of the contradictions and concludes with this observation:

"TV and the movies are obsessed with fun. In the Jewish and Christian traditions, the focus is on happiness. [In the movies,] when the dazzle is over, when the excitement has passed, what's left? Very few people . . . want to be buried under a stone that says "Here lies _____, he had a lot of fun." Fun is not what life is about. Yet it is overwhelmingly what the media culture demands. The difference between fun and happiness is like the difference between sex and love. One is easy but quickly ended; the other takes work but can last forever. One appeals to the senses; the other nourishes the soul."

It's not hard to see the contrast of Christian happiness versus amusements that, consumed merely for the sake of pleasure, tend to be carried to excess, weakening our physical, mental, and spiritual powers. Satan is constantly trying to distract young people with new attractions and alluring amusements that destroy their usefulness as people and separate them from God. Recreation that may cause us to temporarily lay aside religious convictions is disastrous. Although recreation invites us to get out of the rat race of technology-driven living, it never should encourage us to be off-duty Christians; religion cannot be a part-time add-on for everyday living.

Having said all this, we do have some positive guidance: "It is the privilege and duty of Christians to seek to refresh their spirits and invigorate their physical and mental powers to the glory of God" (*Messages to Young People*, 364). Notice how it is actually a duty for us to participate in recreation as part of that full and balanced life Jesus promised.

Games. These fall into several categories. The least edifying are games of chance that encourage gambling, dissipation, and cheating. Those that encourage stimulation of the brain and learning in all its facets—from the Bible to nature to general knowledge—are more acceptable. Those that encourage exercise and social interaction as well as learning are even better.

Sports. Sports promoted in the Ambassador program should be participatory and, for the most part, not focused on intense competition. Look at the culture around you and determine which sports foster the development of skills and character and which have become likened to competitive death matches.

Taking a group of teens to spectator events has many drawbacks and should be avoided. In spectator sports, emotions tend to run high, adrenaline flows in excess, and there's nowhere for it all to go except in yelling and name calling. Commercial interests tend to exploit star players and make them larger than life. This leads to a world of hero worship that is not healthy for young Christians.

Ellen White was observing her grandchildren playing baseball one afternoon and someone questioned her about it. Her response was, "I do not condemn the simple exercise of playing ball; but even this in its simplicity, may be overdone" (*The Adventist Home*, 499). Playing for the right reasons and in moderation

are the keys to healthy sports activities.

Young people are sometimes confused by Ellen White's statements that apparently condemn bicycle riding and tennis. She was writing about specific situations and laying out principles that we can apply today. In the case of bicycle riding, people were spending large sums of money for racing bicycles—to the tune of several months' family wages—with the purpose of engaging in races with townspeople. They were neglecting basic family needs of food and clothing in the effort. The whole thing was being carried to extremes. A similar situation occurred with tennis. Students were missing classes at school in order to play "just one more game;" competition against the community was organized that developed an unwholesome spirit that needed to be curbed.

You can see that taking any recreational activity to an intemperate extreme should be avoided, and not just bicycle riding or tennis. Ellen White was laying out a principle of wholesome activity conducted for the purpose of recreation and within sensible limits.

Music. Music is one of those subjects that everyone has an opinion about. The majority of people seem to feel that whatever type of music they prefer is the best type and any other type is either too old-fashioned or too far over the cliff. Just as Satan will use written or spoken words to try and lead people away from God, he will use music to do the same. Like the many genres of writing and speaking, so there are genres of music: comical, dramatic, intense, inspirational, depressive, eloquent, folksy, uplifting, degrading, poetic, grating—all these terms and many more may be applied to both written/spoken language and musical language.

God is the source of a wide range of musical types. He likes variety, as is shown by His creation. But He is not the author or originator of anything that evokes hypnotic effects, anarchy, dissonance, discord, and destruction of hearing. Since music is not neutral in its effects, in our groups and in our meetings we will want to focus on music that draws us to God without sending mixed messages.

Discipleship. Youth ministry does not involve just doing whatever youth enjoy doing, even though there are fun and games in it. The purposes are to build their Christian character, teach them how to live according to the calling of God, and train a new generation of Christian leaders. If the teens do not find the small gate and take the narrow path Jesus spoke about, then all of our planning sessions and programs and all of our time, energy, and resources that we spend are meaningless. We must be making disciples in every effort we make. Keep this key principle in your mind at all times.

Worship/devotional time. A key component of every Christian's life is their concept and practice of worship to God and personal devotional time. Because mankind's relationship to God is of such importance and these two aspects of life are so vital to that relationship, it would be difficult to call a person a

Christian who does not stay involved in some kind of devotional practice.

Often worship is thought of as something that the worshiper must benefit from or it isn't of any value. We forget that worship is what we give to God; it is not for ourselves. It is our outward expression of thanksgiving, of what our relationship with God means to us. In the Bible we have a clear expression of this in the first chapters of Genesis, where God specifies the worship He expects. Abel worshipped according to God's request, while Cain chose to worship according to his own desires. Today it is no different. For many today, worship is offering what we choose to offer, based on whatever we like or want, with little or no consideration of what God asks of us, and therefore our worship can be just as offensive as Cain's was.

There are several components of worship; each must be carefully and prayerfully examined in our hearts. The music used, the prayers offered, the words spoken, the actions involved—do what brings glory of God. There can be no mixing of the profane under the guise of culture, modern trends, personal preference, or any other excuse.

Personal devotions are the time for connecting personally with Jesus. It's the time for receiving what builds our spiritual strength and satisfies the innermost soul. Timeframes are of no importance here. The apostle says, "I die daily"—that is the only reference we have for time. Devotions need to take place daily; they may last a few minutes or hours. They may consist of short readings one day and long tearful arguments another day. They may begin early in the morning as conversations with God before we even get out of bed, and they may wrap up the day as we fall asleep in His trust.

A hurried lifestyle is no excuse to limit personal devotions. It was Martin Luther who probably best understood this; he said something like, "I have so much to do today that I must spend an extra hour on my knees to prepare for it."

Be sure to include in your programs some instruction and examples of worship and devotion to God. Even though the teens may see church worship, you can teach them the principles behind it and help them to form habits of personal devotion.

Camping and nature. Camping and other outdoor activities are a highlight in the programming of most youth groups. Be aware of some guidelines recognized by all who venture into this world of discovery that must be an integral part of our teaching and behavior.

Pastor Robert Tyson, one of the church's early youth directors, taught that if we are to be leaders of youth, we must become outdoors persons first. He meant that we must not only become skilled in the arts of camping and outdoor adventure, but we must also develop a strong appreciation for an ethic toward nature. The true outdoors person is not a "Rambo" type who straps on a long knife and plows into the wild, imposing their presence and destroying the environment. Rather, they will blend in and become a part of

this environment—they learn to "walk softly." They follow the axiom, "Leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but pictures." One of the goals of the Ambassador group in the outdoors is to leave a site in better, cleaner, and more natural condition than when they arrived.

Outdoor leaders familiarize themselves with every living thing and appreciate each species for what it is—a representation of the creative acts of God, another piece of the grand puzzle picturing the Great Controversy, each with lessons waiting to be learned. "He alone who recognizes in nature his Father's handiwork, . . . learns from the things of nature their deepest lessons, and receives their highest ministry" (*Education*, 119–120).

SECTION 5
the ambassador curriculum

the ambassador curriculum
section 5

how to get started

The first step in implementing the curriculum is to obtain the core materials. There is a Leader's Guide and a Participant's Guide (one for each participant) for each one of the seven modules. We advise that you approach the modules in the order that they appear in the outline below. You can order the necessary resources from the GC Youth Department, through your Conference Youth Department, or download it from www.gcyouthministries.org. The Leader's Guide for each module contains the leader's instructions, which include an overview, outline, and objectives for each session for that module.

The table below is a brief outline of the Ambassador curriculum and the key concepts and objectives for each of the seven modules/foundations.

	Ambassador Program Fundamentals (Revised 2011)	Key Concepts (# of lessons)	Outcomes/Objectives (Ambassadors will...)
1	A Christ-centered discipleship plan	1. Introduce Growing Disciples Framework (1) 2. Discipleship processes (4) 3. Sanctuary (4)	◦ Understand that the power of an Ambassador is found in the character of Jesus being reflected through them. ◦ Understand that successful ministry as Christ's Ambassador is dependent on the degree to which they have become a living sacrifice and are baptized by the Holy Spirit. ◦ Understand that growing as an Ambassador is designed by God to be done in community. ◦ Understand that their role as an Ambassador is to represent the kingdom of God on earth in the middle of a hostile battle that will soon be reaching its climax.

2	Leadership development	1. Thinking Christianly (2) 2. Servant Leadership (2) 3. Every member a minister/spiritual gifts (3) 4. Leadership development (5)	◦ Understand the biblical view of leadership. ◦ Experience servant leadership and opportunities to lead. ◦ Recognize that everyone is a leader and a follower. ◦ Develop skills to effectively lead. ◦ Focus on Master Guide and AY leadership, where they are well established. ◦ Recognize other leadership opportunities within current church structure and surrounding community.
3	A personal, small group based, and public evangelistic mission lifestyle	1. Three components of personal evangelism: my story, His story, our story (4) 2. Small group as basis for evangelism (3) 3. Public evangelism as a reaping exercise (2)	◦ Participate in a small group focused on Christian spiritual growth and evangelism. ◦ Develop a personal testimony. ◦ Share about Jesus and the plan of salvation. ◦ Understand the essence of the Seventh-day Adventist message and its contribution to our world. ◦ With the support of other Christians, intentionally integrate faith in daily activities and personal evangelism. ◦ Understand the place of public evangelism in the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
4	Character and personality development/awareness through outdoor/high adventure programming	1. Linking personality & spirituality (4) 2. Character development through outdoor/adventure program (10)	◦ Explore Christian character traits and personality development. ◦ Actively engage in activities that build Christian character and personality. ◦ Learn skills to process life experiences for holistic growth.
5	Lifestyle vocational/career development through specialized training and advanced honor levels	1. Introduction to Christian vocation (4) 2. Advanced honors (10)	◦ Expand your ability to serve by developing new skills & abilities. ◦ Commit to specialized training in at least two areas. ◦ Become proficient enough in at least one honor to teach it to someone else.

6	Friendship and relationship skill development	1. Connect to Growing Disciples Framework (1) 2. A biblical view of Reconciliation (4) 3. Relational & Communication Skills (3) 4. Dating/Courtship (2) 5. Pre-martial counseling, Marriage & Parenting (2)	◦ Participate in training in order to effectively communicate with others in diverse situations. ◦ Understand & engage in a biblical view of reconciliation. ◦ Develop communication skills to build & maintain close friendships and relationships. ◦ Learn how to lead a person to a saving relationship with Christ.
7	Community outreach development through service projects and emergency preparedness training	1. Introduction to Christian Community Development (1) 2. Eight components of Christian Community Development (6) 3. Emergency preparedness (5)	◦ Understand Christian foundations to community outreach development. ◦ Actively serve their community as an Ambassador for Christ in a variety of ways. ◦ Engage in emergency preparedness training.

our hope

It is our hope that the Ambassadors ministry will serve to provide a holistic response to the needs of our teens to be cared for, challenged, and empowered for service and mission.

AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO I AM SENDING YOU

AMBASSADORS