

Pathfinders as a Ministry



Before we can consider Pathfinderism as a ministry, we need to determine what constitutes ministry. This is not an easy concept to define. Is ministry “church work?” You know, going to committee meetings, or raising money to send away for other people to use. Is it social justice and advocacy work — important work — but with no direct connection with relating people to Jesus? Is it doctrinal study or preaching? Is it a job? A title? A degree? Ministry is a very slippery word. If you’re looking for a clear-cut definition you will be hard pressed. It’s easier to describe it by its functions: formation of community, proclamation of God’s Word, service to God’s people, etc. Try writing your own definition of ministry.

Ministry is _____

Now consider the following questions. After reading them, look back at your definition and see if you have some changes to make.

1. What’s *your* experience of Jesus that others can’t live without?
2. What does that experience give *you*, that you want to do with and for others? Anything passionate? Any vision?

Ministry is _____

Disembarking the SS Church

[This essay, while written to pastors, applies to lay leaders as well. As you read it, consider its application to the Adventist Church, and to your own view of ministry to and with Pathfinders.]

Rick Dietrich, a colleague at Columbia Theological Seminary, relished his work in theological education for laity. After 20 years in the parish, he developed a rather trenchant critique about the way clergy start to think about their jobs after a while. Rick said the clergy, given the institutional features of church life, begin to think their job is to harness people to the shipboard jobs of the HMS Church. The whole point of being a church member, then, becomes what job you can do at the church. But people should not come to us just to fill up empty hours or crowd another set of voluntary activities into their lives to make them feel better about

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

—MARK 1:41 NIV

Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.”

—E.G. WHITE,
 MINISTRY OF HEALING 143

Some ministry definitions

Ministry takes place when Divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God.

—WARREN WIERSBE

Building relational bridges through ministry over which Christians intentionally share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

—NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD
 OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH

Empowering people to be ministers of Jesus Christ.

—BILL EASUM

Ministry is the increase of the love of God and love toward neighbor.

—DANIEL DAY WILLIAMS
 AND H. RICHARD NIEBUHR.

Ministry in the church is not a status or state but a service, a function within the ‘community of God’ and therefore a ‘gift of the Holy Spirit.’

—EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX

Ministry

Ministry is about enabling people to come to terms with God in a way to accept the full fruits and limitations of the wonderful lives they have been given by God. It is nothing more than service, and we need a shared and renewed theological sense of ministry in our churches.

Servant leadership

Servant leadership is helping people to do what God wants them to do with and through the expenditure of their lives in faith obedience.

— JAMES HUDNUT-BEUMLER
DEAN OF THEOLOGY, VANDERBILT U.

Seven Principles for Youth Ministry Excellence

From Giraffe U.

1. Grow spiritually
2. Learn leadership skills
3. Nurture relationships
4. Plan
5. Empower for leadership
6. Communicate
7. Mobilize for service

how they spend their lives. Almost no one gets on a ship just to perform a practical service job, but as I think about it, we do have cruise expectations within the laity such that the church is thought to be the only place you can be a Christian, just as if a cruise or vacation is the only place you can be yourself at peace.

Leadership in the church involves making one statement: “We are in this together; I’m in this with you.” We aren’t Captain Stubing from the Love Boat. Church members don’t work for us; we aren’t CEOs. Most of the literature that is written about leadership is written for business executives and would-be CEOs. Ministry is not about being the chief executive officer of a company where leadership means cutting jobs and slashing profit estimates. It isn’t like military leadership where one’s job is commanding authority. Servant leadership, as practiced by the disciples of Jesus, is not doormat leadership. It is helping people to do what God wants them to do with and through the expenditure of their lives in faith obedience.

The difficulty of being a leader in today’s church is that what people want is a cruise ship leader, or a CEO, or a commanding presence in the pulpit. While personal magnetism and a sense of authority are assets to ministry, they are not the substance of the leadership that today’s church needs. Your job, when they ask for stones instead of bread, is to transform their hearts so that they will want bread, the bread of heaven. This means transforming first and foremost our understanding of ministry.

Ministry is nothing more than service, and we need a shared and renewed theological sense of ministry in our churches. Helping create that sense in the communities and congregations where we serve is the first task in ministry. Contemporary Christian churches and their pastors tend to break in one of two directions when they enlarge their definition of ministry beyond what ministers do: the liberals interpret ministry as service to others while conservatives interpret ministry as bringing people to a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ.”

We need a definition of ministry for all time that is non-clerical, dynamic, and theological. Let me suggest one such definition of ministry. It comes from two of the great theologians of the last century, Daniel Day Williams and H. Richard Niebuhr. They defined ministry as the “increase of the love of God and love toward neighbor.” It may sound familiar. It should. It’s taken from Jesus’ summation of the law. In fact, Jesus derived that definition of what it meant to be God’s righteous people from Deuteronomy in which the Ten Commandments themselves, if thought to be too many, could be reduced to two simple principles. We could do worse in our churches, and we have.

Once we can agree on the task of ministry, a task that is shared, not borne by you alone, then you can lead without extraneous expectations. The job is hard enough with extraneous matter. And that’s why you must aspire to more than management of the mysteries, to a priesthood of a church where everyone already knows what’s occurring. Instead, you must be evangelists, servants of the good news, leaders of a new way. That’s the challenge of leadership: to be servants of the Gospel who lead human beings to love God and neighbor. To achieve this leadership, you need to create a culture, not fill an opening.

—DEAN JAMES HUDNUT-BEUMLER
THE DIVINITY SCHOOL, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Pathfinder Ministry according to the NAD

The following section is taken directly from the Pathfinder Staff Manual Manual, 2007 edition.

Mission Statement

The North American Division Pathfinder Ministries is an organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, dedicated to meeting the social, physical, mental, and spiritual developmental needs of junior and teen youth by challenging the Pathfinder to experience a personal relationship with Christ, having a sense of achievement and responsibility, and developing respect for God's creation including his fellowman.

Goals

Pathfinder Ministries seeks to meet the Pathfinder's present and unfolding needs, to the end that we bring them to self-fulfillment and maturity in Christian faith, characterized by their decision to:

- Accept Jesus Christ as a personal Savior and Lord
- Reflect internalized Christian values through mature decision-making and behavior
- Exhibit the righteousness, true holiness, and fullness of stature of Christ. Demonstrate leadership skills, enabled and empowered to become full partners in active selfless service supporting the mission of the church

Purpose

To *lead* membership into a growing, redemptive relationship with God.

To *build* its membership into responsible, mature individuals.

To *involve* its membership in active, selfless service "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

—MATTHEW 28:1 2, NIV

Objectives

The Pathfinder Club will encourage its members to *belong* to the church, confess their Christian faith, and take an active part in fellowship, worship, outreach, and service.

The Pathfinder Club will *involve* its members as full partners in all aspects of the church's ministry to its members, to the community, and to the world.

The Pathfinder Club will *challenge* its members in the mission and ministry of Christ through the church so that God's Word becomes meaningful and fruitful in their lives.

Pathfinders discovering their world and themselves:

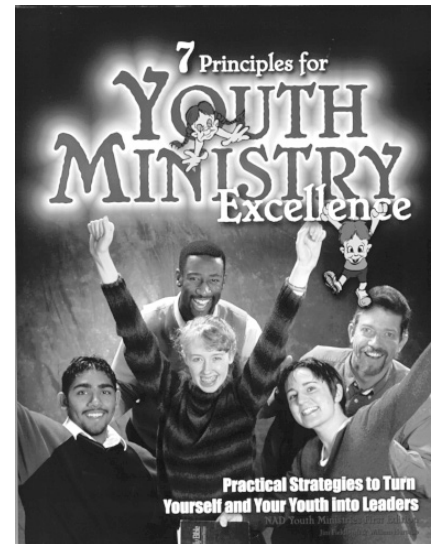
- Learn Christian values
- Develop self-discipline
- Make friends
- Enjoy safe and exciting adventures
- Learn what teamwork is all about

Pathfinder Ministry

Pathfinder Ministry is everything that is done with and for Pathfinders in the church's relationship to the family, the community, and the world.

When does Youth Ministry happen?

1. When youth live out their faith in the church, community, and in the world.
2. When youth and adults together share their faith and life in all areas of church ministry.
3. When youth and adults support and care for one another in Christ.



Great Resource

7 Principles for Youth Ministry Excellence, by Jim Feldbush and William Hurtado, from AdventSource. ISBN 1-57756-019-1. \$11.95. 160 pages. Size: 8.5" x 11".

Church growth dynamics

1. **Grace** - The teaching that Jesus is Lord and Christ.
2. **Worship** - Celebration of God's gift of grace in Jesus.
3. **Community** - Developing relationships where individuals are bonded together with Christ and one another in warmth, love and acceptance.
4. **Service** - Intentionally extending these relationships to others, sharing with them to the good news of the gospel of grace.

From *Building Youth Ministry*.

- Prepare for church and community responsibilities
- Cultivate courage, self-reliance, honesty, loyalty, and kindness
- Learn under the guidance and association of mature Christian counselors
- Acquire hobbies and skills
- Grow in an atmosphere of love and acceptance
- Discover their world and themselves

How does Pathfinder ministry happen?

When we exercise in selected activities. (Practice. See SC 80-81; Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-37; John 3:15; 1 Timothy 4:8)

When we become "need" oriented. Christ's method of ministry alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their own good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence.

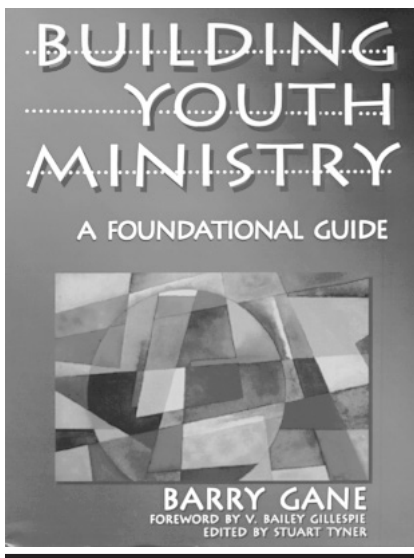
When we make it Personal Ministry. There is a need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing,* and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen.

How can we make it personal?

- The poor relieved
- The sick cared for
- The sorrowing and the bereaved comforted
- The ignorant instructed
- The inexperienced counseled
- We are to weep with those that weep
- Rejoice with those that rejoice

"Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit."

—MH 143-144



Great Resource

Building Youth Ministry, by Barry Gane, from Hancock Center.
ISBN 0-944450-31-8. \$17.95.
312 pages. Size: 7" x 9".

Let's put it together

So, how do we make the Pathfinder program, with its honors, classwork, outings, campouts, fairs, camporees, marching, and uniforms and pins a ministry?

The challenge is to effectively integrate the programs of the Pathfinder club and ministry of Seventh-day Adventist Christianity, into Pathfinder Ministry.

On the following pages, you will find excises that are intended to help you create a mental picture of Pathfinder Ministry for your unit, club, area, or conference.

You are encouraged to redo these exercises with each and every level of leadership that you deal with. Feel free to modify the "subject" of the ad, to fit the mission of the organization. For instance, if the Union Pathfinder leadership did these, the ad might be focused on their role of training conference and area level leadership.

