

Sabbath School Personal Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

JONATHAN OEY KUNTARAF

Jonathan Oey Kuntaraf was born into a Buddhist family. He joined the SDA Church at the age of 17. During his 44 years of denominational service, Kuntaraf has served as a pastor, teacher, and administrator. Before his retirement, Kuntaraf served as the director of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. His wife Kathleen Kiem Hoa Oey Kuntaraf, a physician, served the denomination for 36 years, with her last responsibility as the General Conference associate director of Health Ministries department. The Kuntarafs are partners in preaching, teaching, presenting seminars, and writing books and articles. They have two children.

The Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department serves as the primary religious educational resource for the Seventh-day Adventist world church and fosters discipleship among its members, reflecting the teaching of the Bible and the tenets of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Beginning with the perspective that each church is a training school for the development of Christian workers, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries seeks to educate and equip church members to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ within the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, and to help all members of all ages to grow and mature in their relationship with God, with others, and with His Church.¹

Origin

The Sabbath School Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference exists to ensure that the resources and programs produced for the church in these areas are Christ-centered, Bible-based, and user-friendly. They will involve a variety of modalities in emerging technologies and media that effectively engage both active and inactive audiences. When presented through a variety of extensive training media, they will result in the following:

1. Bible Study—regular individual and group study of God's Word, prayer, and other devotional practices.
2. Fellowship—Christ-centered relationships throughout every aspect of the weekly Sabbath School program and provide an atmosphere of love and acceptance throughout church life.

3. Community Outreach—discovery of spiritual gifts that educate, equip, motivate, and mobilize members in all forms of personal and local church organized evangelism so that they may be transforming agents in their communities.
4. World Mission—expression and perpetuation of a clear vision of the church's mission to the world.

Organization and Operations

The General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department provides multimedia resources in implementing the religious education of the church. They include text, print, graphic, audio, video, and internet media.

Staffing—a director and associate directors(s) administer the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department as needed and budgeted. The church elects the director and associate director(s) on the basis of their expertise and experience in caring for the responsibilities encompassed by the work of the department. In their leadership, the director, associate director(s), and staff will provide a clear sense of direction that anticipates ministry opportunities now and in the future while unifying the efforts of leaders at other levels of the church to be involved with the programs of Sabbath School and personal ministries.

Administration—operationally and administratively, the department, through its director, is responsible to the General Conference president and his advisors for promoting plans and work outlined by the General Conference executive committee. A presidential advisor meets regularly with the staff to listen, provide guidance, and empower the staff to meet the present and anticipated ministry opportunities and needs.

World Advisories—a world advisory normally convenes at the beginning of each new quinquennium. During it, the director, associate director(s), and staff meet with the division directors and a representative of the General Conference administration to discuss the ministry needs and opportunities and to develop strategic plans for the next five years.

Division Sabbath School and personal ministries departments—their responsibilities are to facilitate all desired outcomes of the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department, providing the translation and contextualization of all appropriate resources, and implementing all required training in their full utilization.

Editors—the editors for the collegiate/young adult, youth, earliteen, junior, primary, kindergarten, and beginner Sabbath School Bible Study Guides are appointed by the General Conference executive committee to serve in the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department and are responsible to the General Conference administrative committee through the Sabbath School Publication Board, as may be indicated in their job descriptions.

Functions

Editorial Functions--the Sabbath School Publications Board, a standing committee appointed by the General Conference administrative committee, is the primary organization to facilitate the Sabbath School editorial function of the department. This board, through the editors, is responsible for the development of all manuscripts of the Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for all ages. The General Conference administrative committee is the publisher and is responsible for the content of the students' and teachers' manuscripts. Each of the world divisions is responsible for developing their program helps.

Electronic Media Function—the director and associate director of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries and the editors of the Sabbath School Bible Study Guides are responsible for the development and delivery of materials through electronic media, and for the translation and contextualization of the Sabbath School Bible Study Guides as well as for the student and teacher resources that support them.

Curriculum Development Function—the editors of the Sabbath School Bible Study Guides, in conjunction with the world Sabbath School curriculum committees, normally meet at least once per quinquennium to develop the curricula for the Sabbath School Bible Study Guides at all age levels, and to make recommendation to the General Conference administrative committee through the Sabbath School Publishing Board.

Curriculum Implementation Responsibility—Sabbath School and Personal Ministries jointly shares the responsibility with the Children's Ministries Department in implementing the Sabbath School curriculum and in training leaders and teachers of children's Sabbath Schools. The division should choose either Sabbath School and Personal Ministries or Children's Ministries to establish the training.²

History of the Sabbath School

The Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department has a long history of development. It started as two separate entities and in 1995 became one with two facets of ministries: Sabbath School and personal ministries.

Adventist Sabbath School work began in 1852 when James White wrote the first Sabbath School lessons. As a Sabbath-keeping former Millerite preacher and one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, White organized the first regular Sabbath School in Rochester, New York. John Byington established a second one in Buck's Bridge, New York, in 1854, and M. G. Kellogg a third one in Battle Creek, Michigan, during 1855.³ James White "was deeply impressed with the need of some regular system or plan of Bible lessons especially adapted to the youth."⁴ Originally, the Sabbath School had one objective: "to instruct the youth" of the church through a systematic study of the Word of God.⁵

The need for such a plan, later called Sabbath School, was well justified in those days by the lack of an adequate educational system both in the private and public sectors to offer age-based religious instruction. During the early years of the Advent Movement (i.e., prior to 1852), "little attempt was made to instruct the children in the

doctrines cherished by their parents.”⁶

Early Sabbath Schools had only two divisions, one for children and one for adults called the Bible Class. Teachers placed much emphasis on the memorization of Scripture. Other individuals kept careful records both of attendance and the quality of the pupil’s recitations. Each class decided what it would study. The majority followed the lesson in the *Youth’s Instructor*, but sometimes those were missing for months at a time. A partial attempt emerged in 1863 to provide material more suitable to the varying age groups when Adelia Pataten began lessons especially designed for children in the *Youth’s Instructor* while early Adventist pioneer Uriah Smith published a series for adults in the *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*.⁷

Not until Goodloe Harper Bell, a pioneer teacher in Battle Creek, became editor of the *Youth’s Instructor* in 1869 did the church develop additional resources. Introducing two formats of lessons, one for children and other one for the youth, he collected eight different yearly series and later published them as a small book. The church used Bell’s lessons for a quarter of century.⁸

Organization of Sabbath Schools began in California in 1877 with the formation of the first state Sabbath School Association, followed in the same year by the Michigan State Sabbath School Association. In March 1878, the delegates to the General Conference Session established the General Sabbath School Association under the presidency of D. M. Canright to bring together the various state Sabbath School groups.⁹

The first class for smaller children, called “The Bird’s Nest,” formed in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1878. In 1886, it became the kindergarten division. Branch Sabbath Schools began to appear in 1879.¹⁰

In 1885 Sabbath School members began to take an increased interest in mission. During the first quarter of that year, the Oakland, California, Sabbath School decided to give all its weekly offerings to establish Adventism in Australia. A few months later the Upper Columbia and California associations voted to do the same. The idea caught on rapidly. Then, in 1887, the General Association asked all the Sabbath Schools to give their offerings to help establish the first Seventh-day Adventist mission station in Africa.¹¹ Without intentionally diminishing the importance of its original objective—studying God’s Word--the world mission initiative became a new objective of the Sabbath School.

The first Sabbath School association outside of North America formed in 1883 in Switzerland and another one in 1886 in England. As a reflection of its extensive involvement in advancing the work in foreign lands, the ninth annual session in 1886 changed the name of the General Sabbath School Association to the International Sabbath School Association.¹²

Two important things happened in 1890. *Our Little Friend* with its guidelines for Sabbath School began publication, and Sabbath Schools raised funds to build the *Pitcairn*, a ship used to take missionaries to Pitcairn Island.

When the General Conference reorganized in 1901, the International Sabbath School Association became the Sabbath School Department of the General Conference.¹³

From the start, departmental personnel focused on improving both the quality of the weekly Sabbath School and the number of persons who attended regularly. The department early adopted the goal of “every church member is a Sabbath school member,” and “the Church at study” became the motto.¹⁴ After the Sabbath School came into existence and the state and general associations formed, leadership paid detailed attention to the Sabbath School reports. The first official statistical report appeared in 1878. “The plan is so thoroughly established that once in three months the General Sabbath School Office receives reports, which represent almost every Sabbath School in the world.”¹⁵ The reports usually contained three items: number of schools, attendance, and offerings.

Leaders devised many ways to improve the quality of the local Sabbath Schools. In an effort to prepare better teachers, the department began a special training course for them in 1910. The *Sabbath School Worker* published study guides for several selected books throughout the year. The department also assumed responsibility for improving the quality of the weekly lesson. By 1922 it had two basis series available, one for adults with an adapted version for youth, and a second for younger children. In turn, leadership divided the children’s lesson divided into three age levels appropriate to the stages of a child’s development.¹⁶

Mrs. L. Flora Plummer, who served as director of Sabbath School Department from 1914 to 1936, had a particular burden that the Sabbath School “be a recruiting station, where volunteers are enlisted in the army of the Lord.” It was both the privilege and the responsibility of the Sabbath School teachers, according to Mrs. Plummer, to help develop the members of their classes into “strong, fruit-bearing Christians.” The teachers had three chief avenues to accomplish this: (1) careful Bible instruction, (2) prayer, and (3) personal appeals to the pupil. In 1913 she reported that more than 3,500 persons had been baptized a result of the Sabbath School’s soul-winning approach.¹⁷

At the time when the department organized in 1901, Sabbath Schools were already a major source of financial support for Adventist mission. By 1911 they had raised a million dollars for mission and the second million in three and a quarter years. In 1912 the General Conference committee agreed that the Sabbath School offering for one week in each quarter might be set apart for a specially designated project, thus the birth of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, a practice that has continued for more than 100 years. The Thirteenth Sabbath offerings have helped more than 1,500 projects all over the world. By 1920 Sabbath Schools were raising over a million dollars a year. In the first half of 1921 they represented three-quarters of all mission offerings given by Seventh-day Adventists.¹⁸

For the first time, in 1926 a Braille Sabbath School Quarterly became available to help the blind, and in 1940 the department launched the Braille Youth Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly.

According to the Sabbath School report presented by the General Conference in 1944, the Sabbath School now had three primary objectives: daily study of Scripture, support of world mission, and soul-winning.¹⁹

After 1979, all handbooks of the Sabbath School department included fellowship as another Sabbath School objective. Continuing into the first decades of the twenty-first century, the adult Sabbath School has operated on the same four basic objectives. The *Sabbath School Handbook* states, "Sabbath School has four specific objectives: Study of the Word, Fellowship, Community Outreach, and World Mission Emphasis. These four objectives are the basis for every activity of the Sabbath School in all divisions."²⁰

Prior to the reorganization of Sabbath School to be a part of the Church Ministries Department in 1985, several other initiatives had developed, such as: first Sabbath School Manual published in 1956, *Insight* replaced *The Youth's Instructor* in 1970, Mission Spotlight inaugurated in 1970, and the first publication of Cornerstone Connections in 1982.

History of Personal Ministries

Personal Ministries is a facet of the church whose beginning we can trace to a women's group in late 1868 or early 1869 in South Lancaster, Massachusetts that met in the home of Mary and Stephen Haskell. Originally, a concern for their children drew the women ladies together. It soon broadened to include non-Adventist neighbors and those in whom the Advent hope had dimmed. The group, soon doubling in number, began writing letters, making religion-oriented visits to neighbors, and lending or giving away dozens of Adventist tracts, books, and pamphlets. Stephen Haskell, deeply moved by recent appeals from Ellen and James White to increase the distribution of Adventist literature, sensed that with a little direction, the group of women meeting in his home might be encouraged to expand their activities. On June 8, 1869, he helped them establish a formal organization, the Vigilant Missionary Society.²¹

One of S. N. Haskell's first actions after his election as the president of the New England Conference in 1870, was to organize the New England Tract and Missionary Society. It sought to establish groups like the Vigilant Missionary Society in every church to enlist lay members to circulate Seventh-day Adventist tracts, pamphlets, books, and periodicals through sale or free distribution. The societies also conducted personal evangelism through visits, correspondence, and helping the needy. In 1874 the General Conference established the General Tract and Missionary Society, later renamed the International Tract and Missionary Society, with James White serving as president.

In 1876 Haskell succeeded White as president of the General Conference Tract and Missionary Society. Until he left to open Adventist work in Australia, he devoted his principal efforts to expanding tract and missionary society activities. During this time, the statistics gathered so faithfully by society officers at Haskell's urging provided a good picture of the success achieved in mobilizing the church for lay-evangelistic endeavors. Although the 1884 report indicated that fewer than half of the church members belonged to Tract and

Missionary Societies, those who did were quite active. They reported making more than 83,000 missionary visits that year, writing more than 35,000 missionary letters, and obtaining more than 19,000 subscriptions to the *Review*, *Signs of the Times*, *Good Health*, or one of the foreign-language periodicals. The total of Adventist literature given away was nearly 1,750,000 individual periodicals and tracts²²

In 1897 the International Tract Society purchased a stereotype machine that could be used to prepare plates for Braille duplication. Although the society did produce a few tracts, not until Austin Wilson, a 27-year-old blind student at Battle Creek College, began a campaign among church leaders, that the General Conference committee decided to start a 10-page monthly journal for the blind. Given the task of printing the magazine, Wilson and his wife used a common clothes wringer to make the first issue of the *Christian Record*, dated January 1900. It was a small but significant beginning.²³

The General Conference Publishing Department, established around 1901, absorbed the International Tract and Missionary Society. In 1913 leadership assigned the fostering of lay evangelism to a separate subdivision called the "Home Missionary Branch of the Publishing Department" with Edith M. Graham as secretary. After functioning for five years, the Home Missionary Branch became a separate department in 1918.²⁴

The Home Missionary Department

In 1915 the General Conference recommended the appointment of home missionary secretaries in both the General Conference and the North American Division, so as to promote church missionary work. Unions and local conferences also assigned Home Missionary Department leaders, then called "Secretaries." General Conference president A. G. Daniells said, "The Home Missionary Department is not a campaign, it is a religious movement. It is a revival of pure religion in the church, and the going forth to bear it to others. . . . This department is to train men and women all over the world to go out about their homes to win souls to Christ."²⁵

Activities developed:

1. Bible correspondence course enrollments.
2. Community services involving the work done by Dorcas-Welfare Societies in local churches and community services centers and units. Specific programs included emergency provision of food and clothing; interviewing and referral; adult education classes in first aid and home management; summer camps for disadvantaged children; and disaster relief programs.
3. Ingathering. This annual appeal has made millions of personal contacts, enrolled thousands in Bible correspondence courses, and raised funds for medical, educational, community services, and evangelistic work around the world.

4. Lay Bible evangelism, including personal Bible students and public meetings. Many churches have organized groups specializing in lay preaching, prison evangelism, and specific community services projects.
5. Literature distribution, including systematic house-to-house and mailing programs, tract racks, and individual or church lending libraries.²⁶

The Lay Activities Department

At the 1966 General Conference Session the General Conference Home Missionary Department became the Lay Activities Department. It had as its assignment the task of fostering the involvement of laity in local missionary service. "Missionary service" meant personal or public evangelism or community service, the latter once known as Health and Welfare Service. Several initiatives happened during the time of the Lay Activities Department, including the renaming of the Dorcas Society to the Adventist Community Services (ACS) in 1972, and the Adventist Men's Organization formed from the "Good Samaritans" in 1982.

Corresponding personal ministries departments emerged in the divisions, unions, and conferences. Some world divisions felt that personal ministries better described the work of the department than "lay activities," and began using this title that was then officially adopted in 1995.

The Church Ministries Department

At the 1985 General Conference Session the Lay Activities Department became part of the newly formed Church Ministries Department. Church Ministries was a merger of several former departments of the General Conference: Lay Activities, Sabbath School, Stewardship and Development, Youth, and Home and Family Service. The formation of Church Ministries, however, did not seek to change the organization of those departments at the local church level. As explained at the 1985 General Conference Session, the action to bring these former entities together into one department would apply "only to the General Conference and its divisions." Later it could "be implemented at the union and then the local conference levels."

Representatives from each of the former departments and services formed focus groups for each of the ministries. Such groups enabled an integrative working relationship and the development of a sense of unity among the personnel of the various ministries.

Initiatives developed during the time of Church Ministries include the following:

In 1990, Calvin Smith introduced Sabbath School Action Units to the Sabbath School program. He encouraged the forming of small groups within the Sabbath School consisting of 6-8 persons, with the Sabbath School teacher serving as group discussion leader and care coordinator. Reports from several countries witness to the success of the Sabbath School Action Unit and the need for further development of this ministry.

In 1992 Janet Kangas published the first Children's Mission Quarterly. Next, there appeared the Children's Mission story to provide mission education to children as well as nurturing the joy of giving to mission projects both in the community and around the world.

Serving the Church Ministries Department during the 1985–1990 quinquennium were the following: Maurice Bascom, personal ministries/general church ministries and Gilbert Bertochini, Sabbath School; Erwin Gane, editor, *Adult Sabbath School Lessons* (appointed in 1986); Robert Grady, Sabbath School; George Knowles, lay activities/personal ministries (elected director in 1988); Israel Leito, youth (elected in 1986); Samuel Monnier, lay activities/personal ministries; Leo Van Dolson, department editorial director and editor, *Adult Sabbath School Lessons* (retired in 1987). Laurell Peterson was assistant director. Sabbath school student and teacher editions of quarterlies and publications produced in cooperation with the Review and Herald and Pacific Press publishing associations included the *Adult Sabbath School Lessons* (standard, large print, and easy English editions), *Collegiate Quarterly*, *Cornerstone Connections*, *Junior Sabbath School Lessons*, *Earliteen Sabbath School Lessons*, *Primary Sabbath School Lessons*, *Kindergarten Sabbath School Lessons*, and *Mission* (adult, teen, and children's editions). The department also produced program helps for cradle roll, primary, and junior/earliteen Sabbath school leaders. ²⁷

The General Conference Church Ministries Department staff during 1990–1995 included Lyndelle Chiomenti, editor, *Adult Easy English Sabbath School Lessons*, and associate editor, standard *Adult Sabbath School Lessons*; Erwin Gane, editor, *Adult Sabbath School Lessons*; Charlotte Ishkanian, editor, *Mission* (appointed in 1993); Murray Joiner, personal ministries (resigned in 1993); Janet Kangas, editor, *Mission* (resigned in 1993); Andrea Kristensen, editor, *Junior* and *Earliteen Sabbath School Lessons*; Israel Leito, director, 1990–1993; Calvin Smith, Sabbath school/personal ministries; Gary Swanson, editor, *Collegiate Quarterly*, *Cornerstone Connections*; James Zachrison, personal ministries/Sabbath school (elected in 1994). Patricia Habada, curriculum specialist, and Laurell Peterson, Sabbath school production manager, were assistant directors.²⁸

Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department

In 1995, administration dissolved the Church Ministries Department and combined Sabbath School and Personal Ministries into one department, an organizational pattern that now functions at the conference/mission, union, division, and General Conference levels. At the local church level Sabbath School and personal ministries continue as two separate entities. Personal Ministries offers training and counsel to officers and teachers and develops lessons and teaching aids.

Various projects developed between 1995 through 2015, include:

1. Gracelink Curriculum

For the first time in the history of Adventism, the church formulated Sabbath School lessons for children employing current educational theory and methods. Global curriculum consultants advised and directed the production of the original plan and outlined the teaching methods to be used. Writers from every world division followed the plans as they participated in the development of lessons with the same message utilizing effective, and proven, methods of delivery and teaching.²⁹

During the early planning stage, in the summer of 1996, the world curriculum consultation council met at the TED headquarters in St. Albans under the leadership of Dr. Patricia Habada. Sabbath School and Children's Ministries directors from every world division joined General Conference personnel and the curriculum consultants for a week to discuss and provide direction as the project moved forward. This group provided the focus for those who later developed and wrote the lessons. Then in the summer of 1997, at Andrews University, a group representing every world division of the Adventist Church gathered to write the new GraceLink curriculum. Besides educators and ministers, they included professional writers, musicians, child specialists, curricular experts, all working to provide a curriculum that catered to different learning styles and cultural needs. As the project progressed during a two-year span, small groups of writers met at the General Conference to create additional lessons for each level of the curriculum. It was the first time the church recognized and produced a global curriculum with international representation for children.³⁰

The first level of the Gracelink Bible Study Guide, *PowerPoints* (for juniors and earliteens) went into use in 1999. Then, before the opening of the 2000 GC Session in Toronto, NAD Children's Ministries director, Noelene Johnson, organized a conference to introduce the new curriculum to children's directors and leaders. The following year saw the launching of the Kindergarten and Primary levels.³¹

The four dynamics incorporated in the GraceLink curriculum provide a balanced program and form the core of the curriculum. They are: grace, community, worship and service.³² At the time of this article, the GraceLink curriculum has served for more than 20 years.

2. International Institute of Christian Ministries

For the purpose of training lay members and equipping them to disciple others, the International Institute of Christian Ministries started in 1998. It is the umbrella organization to offer the various types of training that will fulfil the needs and purview of global mission and outreach. The Institute offers several certification programs according to the requirements of the local situation, including: (1) local church leadership, (2) personal evangelism, (3) public evangelism, (4) adult religious education, (5) children's religious education, and (6) youth religious education.

3. Reaching and Winning Series

In order to equip members to understand and effectively witness to various religious groups, the department, in 1998, began producing a series of 15 books that have served as resource materials.

4. Go One Million/Sow One Billion

Go One Million was an initiative of the Seventh-day Adventist to recruit, mobilize, train, place in action, and trace the results of one million lay members for active frontline soul-winning activities. Welcomed by all church divisions at its global launch in 2000, the program has resulted in many lay members involved in various evangelistic activities.

Sow One Billion, an evangelistic initiative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church launched September 1, 2003, to reach one billion homes around the world, it sought to distribute one billion special brochures–invitations to study the Bible–before late 2004. The General Conference subsidized the cost of printing the tracts and Bible study guide.

5. Bible Correspondence Schools

Through the years millions have graduated from the church's many Bible correspondence schools and are now leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in many parts of the world. Some are even serving as global leaders. Once only a print format, many Bible schools now utilize websites, apps, and social media to reach people with the Word of God. Such Bible correspondence schools provide follow up to people introduced to the gospel by radio, television, printed materials, the internet, and other church resources.

Under the leadership of James Zackrison and Jonathan Oey Kuntaraf, the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department worked together with the Bible correspondence schools, world divisions, Adventist World Radio, and the Adventist Global Communication Network to coordinate the International Association of Bible Correspondence Schools (IABCS). The latter is an international organization that initially met in 1998, then began convening every five years, and thus promotes training of members in how effectively to use Bible school materials in their witnessing ministries. One of the recommendations immediately implemented was that Kurt Johnson, the director of Bible correspondence schools and Voice of Prophecy, should also serve as assistant director of the Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department, thus strengthening the religious education of the church.

6. Sabbath School University

Recognizing the needs involved in teaching Sabbath School for young people, Gary Swanson first produced Sabbath School University in 2002, followed by Falvo Fowler in 2006, to cater to the interests of young adults. It was the first Bible study program devised by the Adventist Church that encouraged young adults to explore the Bible in the context of their daily life and to develop a personal relationship with God through such study. The program began at Adventist studios in California, Australia, Andrews University, South Africa, then back at Andrews University, and finally at the Hope Channel studios at the General Conference. Aired by Hope Channel for 14 years; the final show took place in 2016.

7. Adventist Community Service (ACS)

Adventist Community Services was established at the General Conference level in 2005 under the leadership of May-Ellen Colón. One of the activities is a certification program for community service leaders all over the world. In addition to the certification program, ACS International continues to develop and make available other resources in the example and method of Jesus that will bring help and hope through ministries of compassion.

8. Electronic Media

In 2006 Falvo Fowler joined the department, serving as editor of Beginner, Kindergarten, and Primary Sabbath School materials and also managing and producing the department's digital needs. The department has developed several initiatives in the area of electronic media: Sabbath School Podcast started (2006), Sabbath School app released (2010), Sabbath School Audio Reading for the Blind podcast (2010), GraceLink audio podcasts (2008), GraceLink animations (2009), Gracelink Felt app (2011), Vimeo Channel launched (2010), Escuela Sabática first produced (2011), Sabbath School2 app launched for iOS and Android (2012), Sabbath School3 app with Bible Links for iOS and Android (2013), and GraceLink Primary Animations (2013).

9. DVD Evangelism

Launched in 2009, DVD evangelism is an evangelistic initiative seeking to motivate, train and equip members around the world to do evangelism by using DVDs. The NAD ASI developed the DVD New Beginning evangelistic series while the General Conference supplied members with DVD players. The collaboration involved an investment of more than \$5,000,000.00.

10. Discipleship

The leadership of Bonita Shield, who also served as the editor for Earliteen and Cornerstone Connection, established Growing Fruitful Disciples in 2012. The discipleship program materials were developed and produced At GrowingFruitfulDisciples.com. Church leaders, from the division to the local church conference, could access free tools to create discipleship resources; individuals could do the inventory for their own spiritual growth; and pastors and local church leaders could help others to discover their spiritual strengths and challenges. The Growing Disciples Inventory and website transferred to Andrews University in 2019.

11. Bible Lessons for New Members

Knowing the urgent need for religious education for new members, Gary Swanson coordinated the development and production of a four-quarter special lesson series for new members entitled *In Step With Jesus*, launched in 2012. The series has been a welcome resource in churches and Adventist communities as it helps the new believer better understand the curricular structure of the Adventist Church while helping them to more fully grasp its fundamental beliefs.

12. Special Needs Ministries

In 2012 the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department received a request to train, challenge, and encourage the church at every level to be aware of ministering to those with special needs while training them in gospel work. Global Special Needs advisories have been established to build resources and implement strategies to meet this goal. The program led to the creation in 2016 of an Office of Special Needs Ministries directly connected to the General Conference president.

In 2015, under the leadership of Duane McKey (2015-2017), then Ramon Canals (2017), with his associate James Howard (2018), the department focused on the new initiatives *Sabbath School Alive* and *GROW*. The goal of the department is “MAKING DISCIPLES” by working together with the General Conference initiative of Total Member Involvement.

List of Leaders

Presidents of the General [International] Sabbath School Association: D. M. Canright, 1878 [1879-1880?]; S. N. Haskell, 1878-1879; G. H. Bell, 1880-1881; W. C. White, 1881-1882; G. H. Bell, 1882-1883; W. C. White, 1883-1886; C. H. Jones, 1886-1899; M. C. Wilcox, 1899-1901.

Sabbath School Department secretaries (until 1908 called chairmen): W. A. Spicer, 1901-1904; G. B. Thompson, 1904-1913; Mrs. L. Flora Plummer, 1913-1936; J. A. Stevens, 1936-1950; L. L. Moffitt, 1950-1958; G. R. Nash, 1958-1970; Fernon Retzer, 1970-1974.

Directors (after 1974): Fernon Retzer, 1974-1975; H. F. Rampton, 1975-1985.³³

Personal Ministries secretaries (until 1974) and directors: Edith M. Graham, 1918; F. W. Paap, 1918-1919; C. S. Longacre, 1919; C. V. Leach, 1919-1921; J. A. Stevens, 1921-1936; Steen Rasmussen, 1936-1941; R. G. Strickland, 1941-1945; W. A. Butler (acting), 1945-1946; T. L. Oswald, 1946-1958; J. E. Edwards, 1958-1970; V. W. Schoen, 1970-1976; George E. Knowles, 1976-1985.³⁴

Church Ministries directors: Delbert Holdbrook 1985-1988, George E. Knowles, 1988-1990; Israel Leito, 1990-1993; Ron Flowers, 1993-1995.³⁵

Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department directors: James W. Zackrison, 1995-2005; Jonathan Oey Kuntaraf, 2005-2015; Duane McKey, 2015-2017 (April); Ramon Canals, 2017 (April) ³⁶

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NOTES

1. *General Conference Working Policy*, 2013-2014 edition (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association), 361.
2. Ibid.
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