

Warm, supportive friendship is valuable. Relationships cannot be purchased and those without strong relationships are often lonely. God asks us to love and care for others. A growing, healthy church nurtures healthy relationships.

In all cultures, friendships are developed through hospitality. In today's busy world, however, hospitality can be overlooked. True hospitality is a spiritual ministry.

Some people may be a reluctant to get too friendly with the broader community because it may impact church culture. Others may feel that standards for leisure activities may pose a problem. Many families rely on two incomes, resulting in very little time for preparation. If the gospel commission is to be realized, the Adventist Church needs a renewed spirit of Christian hospitality.

In society there are broken relationships, mistrust, hostility, anxiety and hopelessness. People are searching for friendship and genuine relationships that will last. Often, it isn't the meal that they will remember but the time you gave to care for them.

A Few Thoughts

It is easy to confuse hospitality with "entertaining". Hospitality is not based on gourmet cooking, a spotless and sparkling home or witty and charming conversation. Hospitality is to be a delight, without excessive labour or a reluctance to be spontaneous.

Research shows that new members who make at least six friendships are those who are still attending church at the end of the first year. Choosing to follow Christ as an Adventist Christian is a big change. The Sabbath impacts how the weekend is structured, leisure time activities and lifestyles change. Old friends may be unsupportive or even ridicule the choice of this "new church" so new friendships are vital.

Some specific ways to show hospitality and help integrate new members include fellowship on Sabbath and discipling groups that meet in homes. These groups use Bible study, prayer and discussion to encourage spiritual growth.

Not only new members need the care and attention of the church. Members with special needs, teens, young adults and those who may appear discouraged or whose attendance is becoming irregular also need support. Drifting out of the church is usually associated with a sense that no one really cares. A caring church will attract and hold new believers.



THE MINISTRY OF **Hospitality**

Have you been asked to serve your local church as a part of the hospitality team? Or perhaps you serve on a church nominating committee and are wondering what the hospitality team is expected to do. This guide has been designed to help you understand the role of hospitality within your local church.

The Role of the Hospitality Team

The hospitality team is responsible for:

- helping church members find creative ways to express hospitality to visitors (new members and those who are in need)
- demonstrating love and acceptance in church life so others are comfortable and included
- developing a good working relationship with church greeters (in some churches the hospitality team are responsible for greeting)

Activities and Events

These include:

- collecting names of new or potential members or those with special needs. (Privacy laws are to be considered and respected when gathering information)
- organising a yearly Sabbath with a hospitality theme followed by lunch and an afternoon workshop. (Members may be inspired to join the hospitality team)
- occasional tips on hospitality can be shared with members through the church bulletin or newsletter
- providing fellowship opportunities in homes on Sabbath and during the week. This may include Bible Study and discussion.
- creating special opportunities for singles, young people, students studying away from home, elderly, widows and other attendees

Becoming Part of the Hospitality Team

The hospitality team is appointed on a yearly basis.

Responsible to:

The hospitality coordinator is a member of the personal ministries committee and leads the hospitality team. He or she might also be a member of the social committee. In some churches, the hospitality team also has responsibility for the greeters in the foyer each Sabbath.

Time Commitment

- Generally time spent in team planning for the year will require about one hour. Special events may require specific meetings.
- The coordinator will spend time making phone calls to confirm availability of team members for assignments. One or two evenings a month, may also be spent in telephone calls to new members or those with special needs.
- The time required depends on the size of the church. In larger churches there will be several that serve on a rotating schedule.



Term of Office

Two years.

Skills and Spiritual Gifts

God has gifted each of us in different ways. The following gifts are valuable when considering the choice of members for the hospitality team.

Hospitality: is the ability to provide an open door, a genuine and warm welcome to others. It is accepting of others regardless of race or belief and shows no bias.

Helping skills: make an impact on those who may have questions or need directions. Practical help and assistance can be invaluable to those with disabilities and special needs.

Willingness to share: (whatever one has, even if it is meager.) This was demonstrated by the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17), the little boy with a lunch (John 6:9) and the disciples from Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32).

A focus on the needs of others: as demonstrated in the stories of Abraham and the three visitors (Genesis 18), the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-37) and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

A loving heart: towards those seeking relationship was demonstrated by Mary (Luke 10:38) as seen in Simon's home (Luke 7:36-50).

Courage: to risk developing relationships with others as seen in Abigail (1 Samuel 25) and in Rahab (Joshua 2).