

Church Size and Mission Lifeguard

People say, "Size matters." When it comes to Mission Lifeguard, church size matters in how you implement reaching out to missing young people. Consider three categories of churches based on attendance.

A Small Church
Attendance of 1–75

The majority of SDA churches in North America fit into this category. In a small church, keeping track of people usually is easy—everyone knows just about everyone. A family feeling might already pervade the congregation. But young people might desire feeling part of a vast adolescent gathering or feel a need to break away from the church in order to "grow up."

You might not need a computer program to track attendance in a small church, but take your list and focus on who would be a good person to serve as lifeguard to make contact with those missing. What might be helpful is someone with a new perspective or someone able to "think outside the box." A special event also can be a draw.



A Medium Church
Attendance of 75–250

Well beyond an extended family, individuals can disappear more easily in a church this size. Young people often clump in certain age groups, with gaps in others. Juniors might be strong right now, but youth languishes. Leadership gets spread thin or has little or no training. Often parents continue to lead, even though young people already have heard just about everything their parents have to say.



Start a list of who attends, who used to attend, plus potential people to join the youth group. Grow your group two ways:

1. Teach and practice spiritual growth for those who attend.

2. Increase the size of the group by reaching out to those missing and those who haven't joined.



A Large Church
Attendance of 250+

The largest percentage of unnoticed dropout happens in large churches. People become numbers and programs often take precedence over people. Programming can make people spectators rather than participants.

Definitely take record. Coach and mentor those attending to take the lead in the youth ministry. Team up adults with youth, including reaching out to those who are missing. Invest in ministry with others in the church and reach beyond your church walls.

Focus on transitions, such as graduations, moving to or away from the area, and becoming independent.

Keep training young people to take over, knowing they will move on and others will need to step in and begin anew.

Lifeline NEWSLETTER

What's Happening In Our Church



From *Comfort* to *Connection*

Berkshire Hills SDA Church District
Southern New England Conference

It's easy to get comfortable at church–seeing the same people each Sabbath. While Pastor Dennis Farley affirms the friendliness of his church members, he is challenging them to reach beyond themselves and connect with people outside of church.

As their paradigm for "doing church" adjusts, Pastor Farley sees Mission Lifeguard providing tools to support members engaging in outreach.

"Recognizing the Bible as our authority, we look to Scripture for guidance for saving someone who is lost...[Jesus shared in parables] examples of going in search of someone who is lost, someone who has left God...The significance of God seeking and saving the lost models for us the importance and motivation for doing the same..." [*Mission Lifeguard manual,* pages 38–41]

Make Contact

Woodside SDA Church
Northern California Conference

Contact from a person involved with Mission Lifeguard encouraged Pastor Steve McHan.

Because this pastor will soon move to a different church, he is resolved to empower several of his church members who have expressed interest in reconnecting with people no longer attending church. Pastor Steve sees this as part of the church's ministry, not a task only for pastors.

Let Others Know...

Invite others to be part of Mission Lifeguard. They can register on the web site: www.MissionLifeguard.org

Keep Record

Muskegon SDA Church District
Michigan Conference

Why is it that we keep track of the names and contact information for people attending evangelistic meetings, but once those same people are baptized we stop keeping track of them? Pastor Kameron DeVasher agrees with the Mission Lifeguard approach:

"If churches are not willing to keep an accurate record of who attends and who doesn't, they might as well be in the same category as public pools. Outside these public facilities is the familiar sign, "No lifeguard on duty–swim at your own risk."...Churches need to strive for the opposite approach." [*Mission Lifeguard manual,* page 7]

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