

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION: GUIDELINES FOR THE LOCAL CHURCHES

One of the first responsibilities entrusted to the people of God is to provide to all our children the means and the spiritual frame that allow them to enter into the family of God (Dt 6 :4-9). This responsibility comes first of all to the home, then to the church and ultimately to the school, wherever it exists.

In this sense, the responsibility of the local church, as an educational community of faith, is mainly:

1. to provide an atmosphere of acceptance and love to all our children that attracts them to Jesus (Mt 19:13-15; Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18:15-17),
2. to make disciples of all the children within its sphere of influence, helping them to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ, and sharing with them a growing understanding of the word of God (Mt 28:19-20),
3. to prepare them for baptism when they are ready (Mk 16:15-16).

Wherever we have church schools an important part of responsibilities 2 and 3 may be accomplished through the Bible classes. But wherever we do not have schools, the church should provide for these responsibilities.

The goal of the Education Department at the local church (or district) level would be that all our children may receive a basic religious instruction, even if they do not attend an Adventist school.

In the unions where Bible class programs are available in a written form in the national language, the ideal would be that all our children may receive, at least, the religious instruction prepared for the Bible classes.

The easiest way to accomplish this important task would be that each pastor, at local church level, takes care that every child receives a systematic training in the Adventist faith equivalent to (a) the one provided in our schools or to (b) a series of Bible studies adapted to the children age aimed to baptism and given by a qualified instructor or team.

This religious instruction may be provided in many different ways even by some of the educational departments of the church (Sabbath School, Children Ministries, Youth, etc.). The Education Department should take care that this religious education is supplied in a systematic way to every child, by the best means available at each church according to its possibilities.

In order to help to keep track of this formation, the EUD Education Department collects every year a global report from all the EUD Unions. The interest of this report is, first of all, for the Conference and Union Education Directors, who may have by this means a realistic situation of what the church is accomplishing in the area of religious instruction at the local church level.