

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

LOCAL OUTREACH MINISTRY REPORT

A Paper
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CHMN 539-1 Church Growth and the Equipping Pastor

by
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For my outreach ministry experience, I decided to fulfill option number 3, which was an outreach leadership project of an evangelistic nature. Instead of doing some form of traditional evangelism (Bible studies, door-to-door, etc.), with which I have quite a bit of experience, I decided to try something unique that would grow my evangelistic creativity and innovation. Dorothy Hayward, the director of WellSpring Ministry at the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church gave an evangelistic report during a worship service of how her counseling services and support groups were reaching out and touching the lives of people in the community. She mentioned that these mental health and emotional healing services have given the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church a good reputation in the community and that some of those who have attended her support groups have also begun attending church. This sparked my interest.

My wife and I spoke with Dorothy after church and asked her if we could be involved in some way in her ministry. She gave both of us the responsibility of leading out one of her support groups called Grief-Share. This group was designed to bring emotional and spiritual healing to people in the community and the church who have lost loved ones to death.

Through my involvement in WellSpring Ministry and in the Grief-Share support group, I have had the opportunity to observe Dorothy in counseling to learn how she runs support groups and to conceptualize her model for biblical counseling. We have discussed together helpful counseling techniques for pastoral counseling that I have been able to practice in Grief-Share while leading it. As I have led the Grief-Share support group under Dorothy's supervision I have gained greater ability to ask open-ended questions that draw people out on a deeper emotional and spiritual level as well as to practice active listening and show therapeutic empathy with those I'm counseling. I have been able to

form strong bonds with those in the Grief-Share support group, and they have expressed their appreciation for my leadership and presence.

Through leading this support group over the past 12 weeks, I have been able to see the depth of emotional turmoil that can be caused from the passing away of spouses, grandparents, siblings, and other loved ones and have sensed the need of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to provide supports as Grief-Share to help those experiencing such pain. Leading and participating in Grief-Share has even caused me to revisit some of the losses that I have experienced in order to healthfully process some the unaddressed pain within my own life. Most importantly, through Grief-Share I have been tremendously blessed to touch people's lives on a deeper emotional level and to be used by God as an agent of spiritual and emotional healing.

More than this, Grief-Share is an innovative bridging ministry or "entering wedge," to use Ellen White's terminology. One of my purposes to was to learn how to run a Grief-Share group in an evangelistic way as to have a resource that I can use for my future ministry to reach out to felt needs in the community. Through Grief-Share and other support groups ran by WellSpring Ministry, community participants are invited to become connected to the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church. Grief-Share has afforded me such opportunities of which I will share one in particular.

A gentleman who was a former inactive Adventist lost his girlfriend who he had been cohabiting with for the last two years or so to a heart attack in late February. He heard about the Grief-Share group at the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church and he began to attend. He has been so grateful for our care and concern during his loss that he decided to take up our offer to hold the memorial service for his girlfriend at the Village

Seventh-day Adventist Church. Since then, I have had the opportunity to utilize Grief-Share to help him to slowly become more connected to the church. My wife and I have invited him to come to church socials and some of the worship services. He has attended some of these events. As my wife and I continue our leadership in Grief-Share support group, we are hoping to integrate this gentleman more fully into the church body. More importantly, we hope that he will soon recommit fully to Jesus and His truth. Maybe we will even see him re-baptized in the near future!