

**ADVENTIST MINISTRY FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED
AMVI**



MINISTÉRIO ADVENTISTA PARA
Deficientes Visuais

MANUAL

How to start and develop AMVI in the local Church

South American Division

2016

Adventist Ministry for the Visually Impaired

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Adventist Ministry for the Visually Impaired

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SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

For decades those who could not see, hear, walk, or think like people said "normal", were often grouped into a category called "people with disabilities." In this way, those who received this "identity" were remembered for what they could not do.

The type of support given was almost always limited to what was perceived as a physical need. Few efforts were made to incorporate the positive contributions these people had to offer on the line of the main ministries and activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In 2011, the General Conference has formed a committee directed to respond more specifically to this segment in the church. The group was called the Special Needs Committee and was placed within the department of Personal Ministries and Sabbath School Department.

This new committee had a more inclusive ministry. This was an important first step.

However, as the church became more conscious of needs, it became obvious that more attention should be given to all those with special needs who were involuntarily marginalized. The work of the Department of Personal Ministry and Sabbath School was already large, and as such, little attention could be placed on the special needs of those people.

The insights provided by Ellen White grounded the focus on this ministry when she wrote:

"I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God's test of our character." (Testimonies for the Church 3:511)

Recognizing the need to raise this ministry, the General Conference Administrative Committee voted in September 2015 to move the coordination of the Ministry of Special Needs to presidential supervision and encouragement to a greater global emphasis. Pastor Larry R. Evans was appointed as assistant to the president for the Special Needs Ministry.

This new function is directed to ministering to the needs of the deaf, the blind, orphans and those with physical, emotional and intellectual limitations.

Primary attention will be largely focused on providing opportunities for those with special needs to become more involved with the overall mission of the church. In some cases, the physical structure of the church or building will need to become accessible.

Primary emphasis, however, is to do everything for these people to experience inclusion and non-exclusion in the fulfillment of the church's mission.

Reference: <http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story3520-why-adventist-church-is-placing-new-emphasis-on-special-needs>.

ADVENTIST MINISTRY OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION

The Plenary Directive Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the South American Division had a meeting on May 15th to 19th, 2015, and at the time, through the 130th vote, it officially established the Adventist Ministry for the Visually Impaired (AMVI). (See Attachment 1)

Justification

- Considering the challenge of reaching all people with the message of salvation (Revelation 14: 6-12);
- Considering the inspired statement:

“If a selfish and unsympathizing spirit is allowed to exist in any of its members toward the unfortunate, the widow, the orphan, the blind, the lame, or those who are sick in body or mind, He will hide His face from His people until they do their duty and remove the wrong from among them. (Testimonies for the Church 3:517)

- Considering the relevant percentage of people with visual impairment, which in the SDA territory is 1 visually impaired for every 31 people, or 3% of the total population;

Targets:

1. Identify Adventist visually impaired people in SDA territory.
2. Support the organization and initiatives of the Adventist Ministry for the Visually Impaired at different levels of the church.
3. Make aware and train the church on its responsibility to reach people with visual impairment with the Gospel.
4. Prepare appropriate materials so that the visually impaired person has the opportunity to integrate into Discipleship through Communion, Relationship and Mission fulfillment.

5. Organize suitable evangelistic strategies and projects to reach this specific group.
6. Adapt the structure of buildings to fulfill the needs of the visually impaired people.

Mission Statement

Mission: To be and to make disciples through communion, relationship and mission.

Vision: To be a relevant discipler ministry to reach first visually impaired people in South America.

Strategies:

1. Communion - Bible and Sabbath School Lesson in accessible format for all visually impaired members of the church.
2. Relationship – Small Group Real Vision (SGRV).
3. Mission - Spiritual gifts in the service of God.

Goals:

1. Communion - All visually impaired members of the church daily studying the Bible and the Sabbath School Lesson.
2. Relationship - All visually impaired members of the church participating in a SGRV.
3. Mission - All visually impaired members of the church using spiritual gifts to work in the cause of God.

STRUCTURING AMVI IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Requirements:

- To perform a simple research in the church and its surrounding community, to discover the percentage of the members, family, and friends that are visually impaired. By using this social experiment, can justify the implantation of the AMVI in the Church in question. This research can be performed by the church's Adventist Social Work (ASW) department, which can and must to participate actively in the development of AMVI.
- To apply a simple survey in the church to identify people with suitable profile to work on self-denial service for fellow man. In this case, specifically to work with people with visual impairment. The suggestion is to enable, motivate and mobilize the existing group of deacons/deaconess and the receptionists of the church once the people chosen to perform such functions in the church use to have the profile required to work with the people who will be served through AMVI. And it would be a way to make a good use of an existing human resource approved by the church committee. Some people with visual impairment have more difficulties in their locomotion than others. Depending on the degree of visual loss and personal experiences. Especially dealing with unknown environments and locations. Therefore, for the proper functioning of the AMVI, it's essential a good support team, willing to serve with means of transport and as a seeing person guide.
- It is not necessary for the church to have a visually impaired member in order to structure an AMVI. However, for the AMVI working, it is indispensable the existence of a specific target public, in this case,

people with visual impairment. So, if church has not this public yet, it should strengthen the evangelistic area of the AMVI at its surrounding community.

Organizing the AMVI

Model 1

1. At a church committee meeting, in the presence of the districtal pastor, to establish, by vote, the AMVI in the church.
2. Once the AMVI is established, the suggestion is to involve the ASW and diaconate department, as well as the Guest Services Ministry, for the reasons mentioned in the previous item. Among the people appointed by the survey, diaconate and receptionists, choose those who will play the role of leader, secretary, coordinator of Small Groups Real Vision and other positions according the need and work plan. The presence of a visually impaired church member on this team is very important and necessary. If the church in question still does not have a member who fits this profile, seek a person with a visual impairment, adventist, who can provide advisory and counseling service, even from distance.
3. Once the vote has been taken and the work team has been constituted, it must request adequate training from the Special Needs Ministry of the Union or Association to which the church belongs.

Model 2

1. At a church committee meeting, in the presence of the districtal pastor, to establish, by vote, the AMVI in the church. This model is

suitable for those churches where, naturally, one of its members is already doing any work related to the AMVI, and which, being in accordance with biblical doctrine and without ecclesiastical impediments, to be appointed as leader of this ministry.

2. Once the leader is chosen, he or she will form his or her work team.
3. Once the vote has been taken and the work team has been constituted, it must request adequate training from the Special Needs Ministry of the Union or Association to which the church belongs.

Functions in the AMVI team

- **LEADER** - Constitute and motivate your support team. Choose a secretary. Seek and encourage people to help you in your different tasks by creating a network of AMVI friends. Always to keep informed about church events around the world in relation to AMVI. Keep yourself informed and updated on subjects that permeate the world of the people with visual impairment. Organize events, meetings, lectures, tours, evangelism, etc. Be the bridge of communication between the AMVI, the local church and the districtal pastor. Visit, meet and establish partnerships with rehabilitation and support centers for people with visual impairment of community. For example: offering health's workshop, lectures in specific areas according to the needs of the community in question; working with the Pathfinder accessible in case of having an audience in the age group, etc. Keep the team well-trained, informed of the schedule and motivated to serving.
- **SECRETARY** - Create and update the register of interested members and friends with visual impairment. To register the volunteers of the

MADV Friends Network. Together with the leader and the team, set up the activities calendar (monthly, semestral, annual). Keep a record of the birthdays of the month, organize a way to mention the date. Acquire, organize and bring to the hands of members and friends registered in MADV, materials in accessible format according to need and requests that are made. Examples: Sabbath School Lessons, Morning Meditations, Books, Magazines, Biblical Studies, etc. (Request in advance from the Special Needs Ministry of the Union or Association to which the church belongs). Provide accessible Braille and Extended Letter identification tags for local church facilities and other places in case of AMVI events. Support the leader in the organization of events. To be aware to the preaching scale and local church events in order to prepare the environment for the worship service or event to be as accessible as possible for the people with visual impairment. Examples: Using audio description feature in case of having videos or slides; to give instructions to the diaconate and guest services ministry about the correct way of guiding a person with visual impairment, etc.

- MADV FRIENDS NETWORK - These friends can be volunteers who commit to supporting AMVI by using their time, skills, professional training and resources. For example: a psychologist for a lecture, a physical education teacher for outdoor activities, brothers with vehicle to carry people, etc. If there is a commitment and prior register of these people, it will be easier to contact them and ask for their support when necessary.
- COORDINATOR OF SMALL GROUPS REAL VISION - Promote evangelism in SGRV. Promote with the AMVI leader and the districtal pastor, material to support the leaders of the SGRV. Participate in the planning of the ministry. Conduct periodic training and incentive

meetings with SG leaders. Visit your district's SGRV and their leaders.

PURPOSES OF AMVI IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Following the Official Proposal of the SDA church, the purposes of AMVI are:

1. More COMMUNION - Encourage blind and low vision members to establish and maintain their fellowship and relationship with God through access to church literature, worship services, and church events with accessibility features. Encourage the active participation of visually impaired members in regular church worship and church events. Through personal communion, develop love for God, for itself and for neighbor.
2. More RELATIONSHIP - Developing love for God, for itself and for neighbor through communion, promote tolerance before differences. Respect the limitations and capabilities of each individual, as well as the various micro cultures existing in the communities. Constitute Small Groups for people with visual impairment, attending to their specific socialization needs. Promote evangelistic social gatherings among adventist members and visually impaired friends and their families.
3. More MISSION - Strengthened by communion, established by the social bonds through the relationship, develop in the visually impaired members, the responsibility as sons and daughters of God, to act actively in the mission of the church. Through the use of their skills and gifts, to minister the good news of salvation to others.

WORKING WITH BLIND AND LOW VISION PEOPLE

The Adventist Ministry for the Visually Impaired must exist in order to attend, whenever possible, the individual needs of the visually impaired person intending its spiritual, social, physical, intellectual and emotional growth.

1. **RECEIVING PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN THE CHURCH** - The church that wishes to develop a work through AMVI must have their members prepared and sensitized to receive, welcome and integrate the blind and low vision Brothers, as well as new friends, in the activities of the church and AMVI. The preparation and sensitization of the church takes place through training courses and lectures given by the AMVI team of the church that has already been trained; or by a team designated by the Special Needs Ministry of the Union or Association to which the church belongs.
2. **THE SABBATH SCHOOL** - Whenever there is a frequent group of people with visual impairment in Sabbath School it will be necessary to create a new unity that will attend their specific needs. By choice in a room attached to the main nave of the church. If there are few blind or low vision people frequently at Sabbath School, make sure that they sit down as close as possible to the teacher of the unity. By doing this the church will be helping to ensure that the attention of the visually impaired person is not lost in the voices of several teachers and members who speak at the same time. Remembering that the blind or low vision person needs a noise-free sound environment to facilitate understanding of the spoken message. The unity teacher should encourage everyone's participation and when addressing the visually impaired person, should speak in normal tone and volume of voice, calling her by name and not using intermediaries in the conversation. Make sure that everyone have access to the Sabbath

school lesson and other literature used for further study. Assist visually impaired people in submitting their literature request to institutions responsible for producing accessible material. (For Example: Christian Record Services for the Blind, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA).

3. FAMILY CARE - Promote individual or group meetings with the purpose of helping the family overcome difficulties; integrate the family into the community of the Church; to guide in relation to the social projects of the government, laws and institutions that benefit the visually impaired person.
4. EVANGELISM: The work of evangelism is fundamental for the growth and strengthening of AMVI. Visually impaired adventist Brothers and Sisters have an important role to play in reaching others. The human being has the gregarious instinct and visually impaired people are no different. Blind and low vision people, by empathy, can do much for their non-adventist friends. Send Biblical Studies accessible by mail. Create Biblical classes with accessible literature for the blind and low vision to participate autonomously. Create Small Groups Real Vision (own format for people with visual impairment). Offer classes in school reinforcement, introduction to assistive technologies, social activities and others, as long as the focus on evangelism is not lost.
5. ACHIEVING NEW PERSONS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT - The team must to relate to the local visually impaired people community. Know their calendar of events so that there is no competition of dates, making it difficult for guest friends to participate in church activities. A relationship with the Blind Associations should be searched by supporting them in their activities when requested, keeping a friendly relationship, in order to carry the message of

Christ. Sports games, events, thematic parties and others can be proposed in partnership with rehabilitation centers and related associations to attract visually impaired people from the community to the Church.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When thinking about establishing and developing AMVI, the local church should be aware that the main objective of this ministry is not of assistance to people with visual impairment. The paradigms and prejudgement around the blind and low vision person should be eliminated through research, study, training and especially social interaction.

People with visual impairment may or not have financial difficulties and needs, like any other citizen, and not because they have a disability. Therefore, the focus of this ministry is the integration of the blind or low vision adventist into the common church activities related to COMMUNION, RELATIONSHIP and MISSION. And help them to realize the importance of their role as an evangelizing agent.

God pour out His blessings on this ministry, as well as on all those who will dedicate their skills and efforts to its expansion.

AMVI Team
South American Division

Attachment 1

Agenda – Comissão Diretiva Plenária da DAS (Voto nº 130)
15-19 de maio de 2015

MISSÃO GLOBAL DSA – MINISTÉRIO ADVENTISTA PARA OS DEFICIENTES VISUAIS (MADV)

Considerando o desafio de alcançar todas as pessoas com a mensagem de salvação (Ap 14:6-12),

Considerando a declaração inspirada: “Se um espírito egoísta e contrario à simpatia se permite existir em qualquer de seus membros para com os desafortunados, as viúvas, os órfãos, os cegos, os coxos ou os que são enfermos no corpo e na mente, Ele esconderá Sua face de Seu povo até que cumpram o seu dever e removam o erro de seu meio” (Testemunhos para a Igreja, v. 3, p. 517),

Considerando a relevante porcentagem de pessoas com deficiência visual, que no território da DSA é de um deficiente visual para cada 31 pessoas, ou seja, 3% do total da população,

PROPÕE-SE:

1. Identificar os deficientes visuais adventistas no território da DSA.
2. Apoiar a organização e iniciativas do Ministério Adventista para Deficientes Visuais nos diferentes níveis da igreja.
3. Conscientizar e treinar a igreja quanto à sua responsabilidade de alcançar com o Evangelho as pessoas com deficiência visual.
4. Preparar materiais adequados para que o deficiente visual tenha a oportunidade de se integrar ao Discipulado através da Comunhão, do Relacionamento e do cumprimento da Missão.
5. Organizar estratégias e projetos evangelísticos adequados para alcançar este grupo específico.
6. Adaptar as estruturas dos edifícios para satisfazer as necessidades dos deficientes visuais.

Attachment 2

Official logo of the Adventist Ministry for the Visually Impaired

Meaning:

- The roof with the cross in dark blue - symbolize the church that welcomes also the people with visually impaired.
- The colors green, red and blue - symbolize Communion, Relationship and Mission in which the visually impaired person actively participates.
- The green puppet with a light gray cane - symbolizes the blind person.
- The blue puppet with a green cane - symbolizes the low vision person.
- The red puppet in the center of the image - symbolizes all the people of the church who welcome the people with visually impaired, come to live with them in a conscious, natural and respectful way.
- Below the picture is the official name in dark blue - Adventist Ministry for the Visually Impaired.

Changing colors, shapes and position of the characters is forbidden. The only variation allowed and accepted will be in the monochrome version.

