



CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

G L O B A L M I N I S T R Y C E N T E R

— BOARD OF GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS —

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Global Ministry Center

Board of General Superintendents Issues Additional Details on Changes in Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International

This is an update on the previously-announced changes in Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International (SDMI) by the Board of General Superintendents (BGS). The BGS and the leadership of SDMI want the Church of the Nazarene to know the reason for this rethinking of SDMI and what it is likely to mean for local churches, districts, and educational institutions whose students are preparing for service in the field of religious education.

The decision of the BGS to initiate major changes within SDMI (including elimination of the positions of the directors of Adult Ministries and Children's Ministries) was driven by 1) the continued reconstitution of the Global Ministry Center and its new relationship with the local church and 2) the ongoing financial challenges rising from the harsh economic realities facing nearly all mission interests of the denomination.

Beginning in 2009 and especially since the General Board Session in February 2011, departments and ministries at the GMC have been in the process of restructuring. Final action on reducing SDMI to five full-time employees under the direction of Woodie Stevens was taken after much prayer among church leaders and in consultation with the Executive Committee of the General Board.

The number of employees and contracted missionaries serving the GMC has been reduced by approximately 40 during this time. The SDMI decision was a continuation of this process. We are grateful for the diligent and faithful work of all who have served, including those in SDMI.

Where does SDMI go from here?

Listed below are the priorities for Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries:

- The commitment to make Christlike disciples in the nations among adults, youth (through Nazarene Youth International, www.nyitoday.com), and especially children in the local church remains in place.
- Ministry to children continues as a high priority. Two ordained and experienced children's pastors, Rev. Dan Harris and Rev. Allison Southerland, have primary responsibilities that focus on children, parents, and extended family members (www.cmc.nazarene.org). SDMI anticipates the continuation of children's and adult ministry newsletters as a unifying voice for generational worldwide ministries.

- Nazarene Safe™ resources are available to our churches around the world via the denominational web site and SDMI-endorsed trainers (www.nazarenesafe.org).
- Quality curriculum for children will continue to be produced through Nazarene Publishing House (www.nph.com) in cooperation with SDMI. Quizzing and *Kids Reaching Kids* (mission offering projects) are a part of SDMI's foundational emphases (www.childminnazarene.org).
- Continuing Lay Training (www.clt.nazarene.org), led by Rev. John Comstock, will be enhanced with expanded web resources for children, youth, and adult ministries.
- Adult Ministries will continue to promote affiliations, facilitations, and partnerships with a wide range of lay ministries (www.amc.nazarene.org).
- The next phase of development in SDMI is a global emphasis that champions children's and adult ministries throughout the denomination's six regions.

General superintendent and former SDMI director, David Graves, commented on the changes:

In spite of the recent reduction in personnel, Woodie Stevens and SDMI are as committed to resourcing the local church in the future as they have been in the past. SDMI is still staffed with creative, capable, and experienced leaders in the area of Sunday School, discipleship, small groups, adult ministries, Continuing Lay Training, and all the different aspects of children's ministries. They will need continued cooperation and help from district leaders and regional coordinators.

W. Talmadge Johnson, general superintendent emeritus and former director of Sunday School Ministries, offered these words of encouragement:

We live in times of unprecedented change. The church is confronted with opportunities for renewal, although there are restrictions from the economy and other factors. I still believe in Sunday School by whatever the name or structure. This is an incredible moment to be engaged in the Word—living, loving, reaching, and teaching people of all ages the timeless truths of God's love and holiness.

The general superintendents and SDMI are committed to finding new ways to serve the interests of children, youth, and adults through Sunday School, small groups, and discipleship ministries.

As we pray for SDMI leaders, teachers, and the great support network in this ministry, we also ask for your prayers that the Holy Spirit will provide direction in critical matters of the general church, the GMC, the regional offices, and our missionaries.

—Board of General Superintendents
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