

HOW TO BEGIN AN ADULT READING AND WRITING LITERACY MISSIONS MINISTRY

The need for adults to improve their basic reading and writing skills provides an opportunity for your congregation to demonstrate and share the gospel. Beginning an Adult Reading and Writing (ARW) Literacy Missions ministry will provide the opportunity to build relationships with people in your community who may never hear the gospel in any other setting.

In September 2013, *The Huffington Post* reported that according to a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy, approximately 32 million adults in the United States are not able to read. This equates to 14 percent of the U.S. population. Twenty-one percent of adults in the United States read below a fifth grade level and 19 percent of high school graduates can't read at all! Based on recent statistics from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 14 percent of adult Americans demonstrated a "below basic" literacy level in 2003, and 29 percent exhibited a "basic" reading level. That said, according to *The Huffington Post*, the current literacy rate isn't any better now than it was 10 years ago.

"According to the Department of Justice, "The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence, and crime is welded to reading failure." The stats back up this claim: 85 percent of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate, and more than 70 percent of inmates in America's prisons cannot read above a fourth grade level, according to BeginToRead.com. Economic security, access to healthcare and the ability to actively participate in civic life all depend on an individual's ability to read. Visit the American Library Association to learn more about what libraries are doing—and what you can do—to promote literacy. Your contribution can be as simple as reading stories to young relatives, volunteering to read at your local school or donating your unwanted books to libraries and organizations such as Housing Works."

What else can you do?

- Pray for and reach out to those in your sphere of influence who struggle with English.
- Meet with your pastor or church staff to discuss literacy needs in your community.
- Invite your friends and neighbors who struggle to speak English into your home. They need to learn by speaking with English speakers.
- Take a class in teaching English.
- Sit in on tutoring classes. It is easier to teach English than you might think.

Many people in your community need to be tutored, whether children in an after-school environment or an adult community group. The Kentucky Baptist Convention offer assistance in learning how to prepare people to tutor others: ministries@kybaptist.org, 502-489-3530 or www.kybaptist.org/literacy.

BASIC TASKS IN ORGANIZING AN ARW MINISTRY

1. **Vote to recognize the ministry a part of church/association programming.**

This helps the church identify the ministry as a part of its corporate outreach, even if only one volunteer is serving in the ministry. Including the ARW ministry in the budget strengthens this relationship.

Each church or association structures its activities differently. An Adult Reading and Writing ministry may be related to the Missions Committee, the Missions Development Council, the Woman's Missionary Union or Brotherhood mission action group, the Evangelism Committee, the Church and Community Ministries Committee, or any other group that seems most appropriate for your church or association. The most important thing is that the ministry have an identifiable connection to the church or association. This link provides both support and accountability.

2. Select a director.

This position is crucial. The ministry director will provide support ministry for both students and teachers. Experience has shown that an ARW ministry gets off to a stronger start if the director is selected before volunteers are enlisted and trained.

Job responsibilities

- Recruiting volunteer workers
- Providing training for workers
- Administering the ministry
- Supervising volunteers
- Evaluating the ministry
- Recognizing volunteers

3. Enlist teachers and other workers.

- Write a job description or covenant before you enlist teachers. A volunteer should commit to a minimum of six months service. This gives time for the student to make progress and for a good relationship to develop. Commitment to a shorter time will not be as beneficial. A tutor should commit to:
 1. Attend tutor training events.
 2. Teach at least once a week for six months.
 3. Prepare lessons based on the student's needs.
 4. Keep records of students' progress.
 5. Report regularly to the student placement coordinator or program director.
 6. Attend regular teachers meetings.
 7. Contact students when they are absent and seek outreach opportunities to all students.
 8. Pray for and with each student.
 9. Share the gospel with his students.
- Review the church rolls for potential volunteers.

Don't limit your search to only those whose names come to mind. But do make a list of those you think would be qualified and available.
- Personally contact potential volunteers.

There are many advantages to this. Volunteers can ask questions and get immediate response. They feel important because you singled them out and made a contact. Some qualified workers simply do not volunteer without being specifically asked, even when they would like to serve.
- Use ads in newsletters, bulletin inserts, posters, and handouts.
- Not all volunteers involved in the ministry will be teachers.

Some students may need help with transportation or have preschool children who must be cared for during the lessons. Other needs may arise that someone other than the teacher can take care of. Give others the opportunity to relieve the teacher of responsibilities beyond teaching

4. Provide training for teachers.

- **Basic training.**

Training workers is a top priority for literacy missions ministries. Basic training for teachers is available in a 16-hour ARW workshop. This workshop introduces volunteers to basic techniques of teaching reading, available teaching resources, basic witnessing techniques, and Bible- teaching materials. These workshops are conducted by NAMB-trained leaders. Contact your associational church and community ministries director or Missions Mobilization Team, Kentucky Baptist Convention for names of workshop leaders in your area.

- **Continuing education.**

The basic workshop is just that—basic. Providing continuing training for volunteers helps keep them motivated and fresh.

5. Secure funding.

- The best way to provide funding for the ministry is through the budget of the church/association.

- The student is usually asked to pay for his or her books.

This provides the student a positive investment in his or her learning. If the student cannot initially afford the materials, the church or a Sunday School class or other group may help with the costs of the books. However, it is better for the student to pay for the books, even if the payment is just fifty cents a week.

- The teachers usually purchase their own teaching manuals. However, some ministries provide the manuals for their volunteers.

- Supplementary materials can be purchased by the ministry.

A resource library for teachers can be developed. Public libraries often have simplified adult reading material. If simplified material is not available, developing a library of those resources for students would be helpful.

6. Enlist students.

The desire on the part of many adult low-level readers to conceal their need to improve their reading skills makes this a difficult task. Many have had negative experiences with learning situations. They are reluctant to become involved in literacy programs. Assigning one person (placement coordinator) to coordinate this task will make your ministry more effective. Even though the task is difficult, God is preparing students for you.

- **Pray for God to provide the students He has prepared for you.**

Prayer is the foundation of Literacy Missions Ministry. God has and is preparing students for you. You, your prayer partners, and your church need to continually pray for the calling forth of students. Continue to pray for students until each volunteer is working with a student. Mention the need for students each time there are prayer requests. Often you will find that students have been praying for someone to help them learn.

- **Advertise.**

Your printed materials (posters, business cards, newspaper ad. flyers, brochures) should include this information:

- free one-on-one reading tutoring for adults (mention the cost for books)
- confidentiality
- trained volunteers
- email address

- phone number and times to call for further information

If there is a placement coordinator, it is best to list his or her phone number.

If a home phone number is given, be sure there is an answering machine. Potential students often do not call twice!

- church name and address

Use public service announcements (PSA) on radio and television

Contact with community agencies, organizations and businesses for referrals.

Adult Basic Education Counselors
Armed Forces Induction Centers
Bank Employees
Block Organizations/Neighborhood Councils
Church Pastors, Staffs
Community Action Programs
Community Centers
Construction Workers
County Extension Agents, Farmers
Crisis Clinic Employees
Denominational Social Service Agencies
Driver's License Workers
Employment Office/ Manpower Training Programs
Factory/Industrial Workers
Family Counselors
Goodwill Industries
Halfway Houses/Rescue Missions
Health Agencies
Head Start Parent Group Leaders
Homes for Mentally Disabled People
Homes for Unwed Mothers
Legal Aid Society
Low Income Housing Resident Council Members
Medical or Hospital Receptionists/Admissions Clerks
Migrant Ministry/Migrant Council
Minority Group Leaders
Motor Vehicle Department
Newspaper Editors/Reporters
Personnel Directors
Policemen
Prisons and Jails
Refugee Resettlement Offices
Salvation Army
School Principals, Teachers, Counselors
School Reading Specialists
Social Security Office
Social Service Agency Workers/Directors
Technical/Trade School Counselors
Truant/Probation/Juvenile Delinquent Officers
Trucking Companies, Truck Drivers
Urban Renewal Housing Management/ Low-Income Housing Office
Vocational Rehabilitation Department

7. Place students with teachers.

- Conduct the initial interview.
Ask for the student's name and telephone number and arrange for a time and place to conduct the initial interview .If the student is available only in the evening and you have no volunteers for that time, you must refer the student to another program. Conduct the placement evaluation to determine which teaching material is appropriate.
- Assign the student to a tutor.
- Decide where to meet.
Neither your home nor the student's home will provide the best setting for teaching. Interruptions such as the telephone, unexpected visitors, or children at play often prove disruptive. Lessons may be conducted in a church, library, school, or any quiet place the student can feel comfortable. The staff of a church, association, or Baptist Center may choose to develop a literacy center in their building. There could be a designated area where volunteers and students could have lessons on their own schedule.
- Decide on length of class.
Plan to give not less than two hours a week to the class: one two-hour session or two one hour sessions.

8. Provide prayer support.

Literacy Missions Ministry was founded and based on prayer. The effectiveness of your ministry will be directly related to the amount of time and effort invested in prayer. Work that seeks spiritual results requires spiritual preparation and effort.

- Each literacy missions volunteer should have at least one prayer partner.
But do not limit prayer partners to one. Being prayer partners gives opportunities for homebound people and people working full time to be a part of your ministry.
- Each student should have at least one person praying for him or her.
Preferably, this should not be the same person who is praying for the tutor. Again, don't limit the prayer partner to one. Protecting the confidentiality of the student is important. If the student does not want his or her name or details of his or her life shared with others, respect those wishes. The prayer partner can pray in the student's behalf without using or knowing his or her name. They can pray for "Sarah's student." God will know in whose behalf the prayer is offered.
- Tell the student that someone else is praying for him or her besides the teacher.
- Ask your prayer partners to pray for you and your student during the time you are teaching. This will help both of you.
- At every opportunity, request prayer for literacy missions needs. At prayer meetings, Sunday School classes, mission prayer groups, and special prayer vigils, tell what the needs are and ask for prayer support.
- Report answered prayers.
Keep a list of prayer requests and answers. Be sure to report these to the appropriate groups and to give honor to God for how He is working in the lives of people. Take time to thank people for their prayer support.

9. Inform the church/association about the ministry.

Make at least an annual written report about the ministry to the church.
Meet with the pastor or staff person related to the ministry at least quarterly.
Regularly display promotional materials about the ministry.

10. Basic materials needed

Available from North American Mission Board www.namb.net/literacy

Literacy Missions Adult Reading and Writing Workshop Manual, North American Mission Board,
Available from New Readers Press – 1-800-448-8878

Laubach Way to Reading

- Each of the four Skill Books, both student and teacher editions
- Checkups for each of the four Skill Books
- Correlated readers for each of the four Skill Books
- More Stories series

Voyager, Reading and Writing for Today's Adults
Books 5, 6, and 7

- Student and Teacher's Books

11. For further information

Go to www.kybaptist.org/literacy , ministries@kybaptist.org or (502) 489-3530.